Hafa Adai!

Tinian gearing up for Toys for Tots program. PAGE 2
Chief assures Labor will address workers' woes. PAGE 3

Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXVI, Issue No. 254

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NOTICE

There will be no issue of *Saipan Tribune* on Dec. 26, 2016 and Jan. 2, 2017.

Happy holidays!

Submerged lands revert to NMI

JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The irony was not lost to the scores of CNMI officials present at yesterday's signing ceremony when the Commonwealth finally got back its submerged lands—even though the lands were not freely given to the federal government.

See SUBMERGED on Page 4

JON PEREZ

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, left, signs the document stating the transfer of management of the submerged lands while Lt. Gov. Victor B. Hocog and Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), right, look on yesterday at the Governor's Office conference room.

NMC professor of 25 years passes away

By ERWIN ENCINARES
erwin_encinares@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The longest teaching professor at the Northern Marianas College, Barry Wonenberg, passed away yesterday. He was 58 years old.

Wonenberg

Sources said Wonenberg suffered from a heart attack at about 6:30am yesterday. The actual time of his passing has yet to be confirmed.

NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez expressed sympathy while recognizing Wonenberg's talents and accom-

See NMC on Page 4

DESPITE EXTREME CONDITIONS

Unexplored ocean depths bustling with life

APRA HARBOR, Guam—A team of geologists, chemists, and biologists aboard research vessel *Falkor* have just finished surveying the largely unexplored Mariana back-arc for life at depths greater than 13,000 feet.

Dr. David Butterfield, JISAO, University of Washington, and Dr. William Chadwick, NOAA-PMEL and Oregon State University, led the group to the back-arc, returning for the second phase of a two-part exploration of

See OCEAN on Page 4

The crew of the R/V *Falkor* recovers *SuBastian* during sunset in the Mariana back-arc.

SCHMIDT OCEAN INSTITUTE

Park opening moved to early 2017

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

The opening of Puerto Rico Park has been moved to early next year from the original schedule of Dec. 25, 2016, according to Division of Parks and Recreation director Eli Cabrera and Office of the Governor public information specialist L.J. Castro.

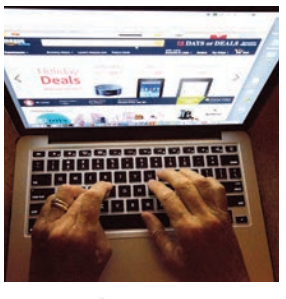
According to Castro, Puerto

See PARK on Page 4

ERWIN ENCINARES

The soon-to-be-opened Puerto Rico Park is starting to grow grass as it awaits for final touches before being opened in early 2017.

INSIDE



BUSINESS
Holiday shoppers are finding a haven online as retailers ramp up expedited shipping.

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NATION
Donald Trump's children may see his move to the White House as a way to raise money.

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ASIA
The U.N. human rights chief asks the Philippines to investigate President Rodrigo Duterte.

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SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

Tinian gearing up for Toys for Tots program

Thanks to the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve and the nearly 20 CNMI sponsors, Tinian children will be receiving over 600 toys and gifts this Christmas season.

"With the downturn in the Tinian economy, we anticipate more children will be needing toys this Christmas season as the Toys for Tots Program was created to bring smiles to children in our community," said Tinian Youth Athletes Club president Connie M. San Nicolas, who is also the wife of Tinian Mayor Joey Patrick San Nicolas.

Toys will be distributed to qualified children ages 3 to 12 at the Antonio M. Borja Amphitheatre in San Jose Village on Friday, Dec. 23, from 7pm to 8pm. Special guests will include Santa Claus, Elvis Kiyoshi, and San Nicolas. There will also be a photo booth for the kids and the kids at heart. Light refreshments will also be served.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Thanks to the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve and the nearly 20 CNMI sponsors, Tinian children will be receiving over 600 toys and gifts this Christmas season.

Special thanks go out Tinian Youth Center director Bernadita C. Palacios and staff and the officers of TYAC for their hard work in preparing for the event.

The main sponsor of the event is the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. Other major sponsors are Imperial Pacific, TSL Foundation, Docomo Pacific, Bridge Capital, Marianas Visitor's Authority, Telesource, the CNMI government, CNMI Division of Youth Services, JC Café, Huang Shun Corp., Chacha Poker, Lucky Qiang Store, Law Office of Attorney Janet H. King, Alfred Yue, Susan Perez, Barbara Borja, 15th Tinian Municipal Council, and the Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan.

"On behalf Tinian's children, I would like to thank the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve and all of our sponsors for giving to this worthy cause. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!" San Nicolas said. ***(PR)***

Credit for Prior Learning info session

The Prior Learning Assessment Program awards college credit for knowledge gained through employment training programs, military services, and life-experiences as self-assessed and documented in a portfolio. The Northern Marianas College will be hosting free information session to highlight the "Prior Learning Assessment" program. The session will be held on Thursday, Jan. 5 2017, at 5:30pm in Room D-1.

The Prior Learning Assessment Program can help working and retired professionals enhance their resumes with college credit, earn college credit toward a degree of their choice, and get ahead in or re-enter the workforce.

Students enrolled in the program may receive up to 30 credit hours toward degree completion.

The Prior Learning Assessment Program is ideal for adult students who wish to complete a degree while working in their careers. The typical student enrolling in this program is generally 25 years or older with at least five years of work experience and meets the general admission requirements of the college.

In addition to the Prior Learning Assessment Program, the info session will feature a discussion on the availability of scholarships for government and private sector employees.

For more information, contact Bobbie Merfalen, dean of Academic Programs and Services, at 237-6706 or email barbara.merfalen@marianas.edu or visit marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

PIC re-launches The Galley

Apparently, Pacific Islands Club believes that bigger is always better. That's exactly what they did with the relaunch of The Galley yesterday morning, with the establishment increasing in both size and menu.

Yoshihito Shibahata, general manager of PIC, said, "The Galley used to be your basic coffee pickup site with some snacks. Now, we extended everything to have a full service restaurant."

The newly improved restaurant will now be open from 6am to 12am.

"The restaurant is open for as long as possible so if any of our guests ever need anything, they can just pick it up in here," Shibahata said.

MICHAEL T. SANTOS

Bishop Ryan Jimenez and Fr. Romil Aperocho are joined by Yoshihito Shibahata, general manager of PIC, and food & beverage director Steve Balakrishna. At right is Brad Ruszala, executive director of sports, entertainment and activities for PIC.

Bishop Ryan Jimenez as well as Fr. Romil Aperocho gave ceremonial blessings during the relaunch, while Marianas High School's Rhythm and Harmony made a special appearance to perform for the attendees.

The Galley now has a brand new kitchen in the premises and an extended eating space.

"We want to serve more items for guests. We expanded the menu to include a variety of different dishes in comparison to small snacks. From cheeseburgers to pizza, customers can expect to be presented will an assortment of freshly warm food," Shibahata said.

Brad Ruszala, executive director of sports, entertainment and activities for PIC, said, "The work has been going on for about a month and a half now, resulting in an expanded kitchen, eating room, and an improvement on all merchandise available for customers." ***(Michael T. Santos)***

Castro's mobile app to make land transactions faster

JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Land transactions in the CNMI would soon become faster once a land mobile application is set up here in the Commonwealth. Guam senator-elect William Mendiola Castro developed the Guam Land Mobile App, which allows you to digitally view the data of a property.

Castro, who made the app while Guam's Office of Technology's chief information officer, made a brief presentation last Tuesday at the Governor's Office's conference room. Discussions are ongoing on how the CNMI could adopt the app.

Rep. Vinson E. Sablan (Ind-Saipan) said the CNMI government would function more efficiently once the app becomes operational here. "It gives us the opportunity to have the information quickly and the opportunity for our government to function more efficiently and effectively."

"It is really amazing how this app works. Aside from helping in e-commerce, it also promotes public safety."

He added that the CNMI should also keep up with the changing world. "The world is changing. A lot of people are getting rid of paper and are using more handheld devices."

"Our islands too are changing, so is the lands and the population. This type of technology would help us navigate these changes. I would be happy to have a technology like this in the CNMI, making it possible for our people to access information right away."

Press secretary and representative-elect Ivan A. Blanco echoed Sablan, adding that the app is very user friendly. "You just download it on your phone and you could get the information right away if you want to know who owns a particular property."

The app is particularly important to developers and others involved in land dealings. "The app can also give you the land value range, the size, lot number, environmental impacts—like if it's in a flood zone—topography if it is sloppy, and check if it is in a protected area for endangered species," said Blanco.

Blanco met with Castro two years ago when the latter was still the Bureau of Statistics and Plans director. Blanco said the app made him immediately think about what it could do for the CNMI. "So I asked him if he could come over and help us do it and he said yes."

"Later on, we started talking about the memorandum of understanding about getting some programs between the CNMI and Guam, and improving our relationship. One of the things that came up is this mobile app."

Setting up the app would take more than a year with the cost of $10,000 to $30,000. "We're going to do this in the CNMI. It is just a matter of digitizing our land maps first. Then we can upload it to this program, as soon as we gathered all information from the [departments of Lands and Natural Resources and Public Lands."

DLNR Secretary Richard B. Seman also welcomed the idea. "Allowing our people to digitally view land and environmental data is in line with [Gov. Ralph DLG] Torres' progressive agenda to improve government services for our citizens."

Chief assures Labor will address workers' woes

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

So far, no complaints have been filed by any worker against Sino Great Wall International Engineering, the company working to build the multimillion-dollar Imperial Pacific Resort in Garapan.

"I am not aware of any filed complaints," said Labor Secretary Edith Deleon Guerrero said.

The workers last week held a peaceful protest near the construction site and demanded that Sino Great Wall pay their wages.

"[DoL's] Enforcement Division is addressing the matter since onset regarding the workers concerns of unpaid wages. Without a question [DoL] will pursue not just this matter but any and all employment related matters for any employee(s) and with any employer doing business in the CNMI," said Deleon Guerrero.

She said protecting employee rights is their No. 1 priority. "It is important that employee rights are protected which includes timely and full payment of wages."

Deleon Guerrero also reminded employers that DoL considers workers' rights a serious issue. "All businesses in the CNMI are expected and shall adhere to employment laws. [DoL] considers employer responsibility and the protection of employee rights a serious matter."

IPI: Issue between subcontractor, workers

IPI downplayed last Friday's protest, saying that they are not involved in the issue and it is between two parties not connected with the Hong Kong-based conglomerate. Details were limited and Sino Great Wall has not issued any statement as of press time.

IPI clarified in a statement that they are not involved in the dispute. "IPI states that the protest involves a dispute between Sino Great Wall Int'l Engr. (CNMI) Co. LLC and its employees."

"The dispute does not involve IPI. IPI reassures the CNMI that its ongoing construction of its multimillion-dollar facility is not affected

See CHIEF on Next Page

Christmas Brunch
@ Isla Café Restaurant
December 25, 2016 • 11:00am~2:00pm
Special Roasted Beef Ribeye, Roasted Pig, Tuna Sashimi, Crab Legs,
Oysters on the Half Shell and much more!!!
Free flowing Wine, Sparkling Wine & Miller Lite Beer
$32.00* Adults
$14.00 Kids (4-11)
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Use your Lucky 7 Card and be entered to win every time you fuel five gallons of fuel! You win and we pay $500 towards the bill of your choice. Get ahead of your next credit card, car payment, etc! Ten winners every week, so fuel up at any Shell Station for your chance to win.
*No purchase necessary. Some conditions apply.
See store for details.

Zarones pleads guilty

After all the motions that led to the appointment of a special prosecutor, the scheduled bench trial yesterday in the traffic case of Chief Solicitor James M. Zarones came to a halt, with the defendant pleading of "no contest."

Zarones pleaded *nolo contendere* or no contest to the case, charging him with failure to yield to the right of way to another motorist.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho accepted Zarones' plea and ordered him to pay the maximum $25 fine plus $10 in court costs for a total of $35.

Zarones entered a no contest shortly after Camacho denied his motion to dismiss the case.

Attorney Matthew Holley, the court-appointed special prosecutor, said he was ready for the trial and that he has two witnesses—Sgt. Juan Mendiola who issued the citation and the driver of the other vehicle. Both witnesses were in the courtroom.

A plea of *nolo contendere* or no contest means a defendant admits no guilt for the offense, but the court can determine the punishment. The purpose of the plea is often to avoid being sued civilly for essentially confessing to an offense.

Camacho on Friday appointed Holley as special prosecutor. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

NMC

From Page 1

plishments.

"Barry Wonenberg [was] an extraordinarily talented artist and one of the most beloved instructors at Northern Marianas College. He was a great asset to our college and we will miss him dearly," said Fernandez.

"He was NMC's longest serving instructor, and his contributions to the college and his dedication to student learning will not be forgotten," she added. "We plan to commemorate his life with a tribute ceremony to be announced at a later date."

"His sculptures and other works of arts have been recognized locally and internationally, and his active involvement in the arts and humanities earned him the respect and admiration of the CNMI community," added Fernandez.

"Please keep Barry and the family in your thoughts and prayers," said Fernandez, addressing NMC students through email.

Wonenberg also served as a board member of the Northern Marianas Humanities Council.

NMHC board chair Frankie Eliptico said NMHC lost a valuable partner with Wonenberg's passing.

"Because of his incredible talent and wealth of knowledge, we always valued Barry's insight and vision on the Humanities board," said Eliptico. "The Humanities has lost a great advocate and we have lost a good friend and colleague."

"He was a phenomenal artist whose creative brilliance influenced many students and other painters, sculptors, and designers in the CNMI and elsewhere," he added.

Among the most pained by Wonenberg's passing was his best friend, Department of Community and Cultural Affairs Secretary Robert Hunter.

"He was my best friend in the world. Barry loved Saipan; he is a great human being. Barry loved the people here and was a great dad. He was also the longest serving instructor of NMC. It's a big loss. It's a sad day for me and a sad day for a lot of people," said Hunter.

Hunter recalls being with Wonenberg the night before his untimely death.

"It was totally surprising. I was with him last night until about 8:30pm and he was just fine. It was a shock to everybody that morning," recalled Hunter.

Wonenberg taught arts at NMC for 25 years. He had a Bachelor of Arts from Boise State University and Masters in Education from Framingham State College. He specialized in teaching ceramics, sculpting, and bronze casting at NMC.

Wonenberg also represented the CNMI at the 9th, 11th, and 12th Annual International Sculpture Symposium, an international sculpting competition in China.

He was also an illustrator of CNMI history textbooks. Several of Wonenberg's large scale sculptures remain on permanent exhibit at the International Sculptors Symposium in China and he also represented the CNMI at several Festival of the Pacific Arts.

CHIEF

From Page 3

and will continue as scheduled. IPI is hopeful that the parties will resolve the dispute amicably and in a timely manner."

Unfortunate incident

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said unfair labor practices have no place in the CNMI. "It is unfortunate that we have had to experience this on our islands. This is something that the government or anyone on the island should not tolerate."

IPI said they had already paid Sino Great Wall.

Torres advised IPI to make sure that even workers of companies they hired as subcontractors get paid. "At the end of the day [IPI] is still responsible for the situation, because that's where the permit is."

He is confident that IPI's Garapan hotel would be finished on time. "I'm confident [IPI] would finish their project."

SUBMERGED

From Page 1

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres signed yesterday the patent transferring the Northern Islands submerged lands from the United States to the CNMI at the Office of the Governor's conference room.

Others present were Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), Office of Insular Affairs field representative Harry C. Blanco, Lt. Gov. Victor B. Hocog, Senate President Francisco M. Borja (Ind-Tinian), and Senate Vice President Arnold I. Palacios (R-Saipan).

Rep. Joseph Leepan Guerrero (R-Saipan), representative-elect Gregorio Sablan Jr., Cabinet secretaries Mark O. Rabauliman (Commerce) and Richard B. Seman (Lands and Natural Resources), commissioners Robert Guerrero (Public Safety) and Georgia Cabrera (Corrections), Bureau of Environmental Coastal Quality administrator Frank Rabauliman, and Mariana Islands Nature Alliance members also witnessed the event.

Torres said the submerged lands had been a sensitive issue for the people of the CNMI. "This issue is part of our culture and our way of life. It is not easy to move this in D.C., that's why we thank [Delegate] Kilili in helping us push for the federal government give back the submerged lands to us."

He recalled a conversation he had with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration assistant administrator for Fisheries Eileen Sobeck, who told him that the federal government is giving back the submerged lands.

Torres replied: "I think you're giving back something that we already own. You actually took it away from us. In fact, it is not three miles, we're asking for 200 miles. You're arguing something that I still believe is ours. …When we voted to be part of the United States, we voted to be part but it doesn't make sense to give you our waters."

Torres, however, still saw the bright side of the deal. " As much as we want 200 miles, we should be glad we have three. Then we're going to continue to work in order to move further beyond that. Let's protect our waters for the next generation as we managed our submerged lands."

Sablan echoed Torres' sentiment, adding it has not been an easy task to convince the federal government. "This is a result of countless back-and-forth negotiations. There's an irony in this situation because we're actually given back land that actually belongs to us. Throughout all this time, I find it ironic in getting back land that we strongly believe is ours."

"But we are a government ruled by law and the courts had [also] decided on the submerged lands. The bill passed the [U.S.] House but it got stuck in the Senate. Finally we got it. We try to get the best of every situation and we are aware of the work done by Gov. Torres and the late governor [Eloy] Inos in getting the patent transferred. We're going to continue to fight for it."

Borja said CNMI officials would continue to try and get back what is truly for the people of the Commonwealth. "In the first place, we have not given it to the federal government. We need to continue to try to get back what is ours. Especially on Tinian where there are restrictions on the submerged lands with the [U.S.] military."

"We need to continue to support this to get back the submerged lands. We're supposed to get 200 miles. I never read in our history that we gave the lands to the U.S. I ask all our leaders to work together so we could get back most of our submerged lands."

Palacios said that getting back the submerged lands is the result of long discussions with NOAA and the Department of the Interior. He said all is not lost as the CNMI could continue talking with federal officials.

"There were provisions that if the CNMI had some problems with certain issues with some federal agency, then we could come to the negotiation table, and that was cited on the conveyance bill. We're going to make sure the CNMI's interests are protected as anticipated by [Delegate Sablan's] bill. We're looking forward to the closure of this chapter, and to work with NOAA and [DOI]."

Hocog also cited the CNMI Covenant with the U.S. where it was never mentioned that the federal government owns the submerged lands. "And that makes it more difficult, getting back something that is actually ours and we did not give them. Being an adopted family of the U.S., we live with it and the law of the federal government."

"We're part of the family but we must work on improving the document and see what more needs to be done so we could obtain real ownership. They gave it back, but [still] it is not actually ours because they still hold a large portion. We need to work on it and continue with the negotiations."

OCEAN

From Page 1

the region.

In 2015, the team of scientists located new hydrothermal vents in the back-arc region, including evidence of recent lava flows. This year, the team returned to these vent systems with the new remotely operated vehicle, *SuBastian*, to characterize their water chemistry and biodiversity. The new results fill a gap in knowledge about the biogeography of these unique deep-sea ecosystems and has implications for how tectonic setting influences the composition of chemosynthetic animal communities worldwide.

The new vent sites have spectacular chimneys made of sulfide minerals, some up to 30 meters (100 feet) tall. The chimneys were belching smoky vent fluid at temperatures up to 365°C (690°F) and were covered with vent animals including "hairy snails," shrimp, crabs, mussels, limpets, squat lobsters, anemones, and polychaete worms. Scientists on board *Falkor* suspect that some new species have been discovered at the new sites, but confirmation will have to await further study back on shore.

The new observations show that the newly discovered vent sites have an ecosystem that is characteristic of the Mariana back-arc, with some animal species found nowhere else on Earth. This, despite the fact that each vent site is relatively small and isolated, being separated from the others by up to 100 miles. The new observations suggest that the back-arc vent sites are relatively long-lived and that each site has biological "connectivity" with the others despite the long distances. The study also confirmed that the back-arc ecosystems are distinct and different from the nearby volcanic arc hydrothermal ecosystems, supporting the idea that geological and chemical environment play a key role in selecting animal community composition at hydrothermal vents.

This is the first series of scientific dives for ROV *SuBastian*. Equipped with numerous cameras, including a high-definition 4K video camera, the dives were live streamed onto YouTube and watched by millions. The multidisciplinary team will continue to analyze the data and samples collected during this expedition to advance research on how life thrives on these extreme deep-sea hydrothermal vents. This research was supported by the NOAA Ocean Exploration and Research Program, the NOAA Pacific Islands Regional Office, and the Schmidt Ocean Institute. ***(PR)***

PARK

From Page 1

Rico Park is now about 95 to 98 percent complete. It is just awaiting certain logistical preparations, final inspection of the entire park, and the signing of the final paper work.

"We are just making sure everything is complete and sound before we open up the park," he said.

Castro also mentioned federal government transition, Typhoon Soudelor, and the 2016 rainy season as some of the minor contributing reasons for the delay in the park's opening.

Cabrera said he is not privy to the reasons for postponing the park's opening.

"I was told that the opening was postponed to February or March [but] I don't know why," said Cabrera.

Cabrera said that the Marianas Visitors Authority played a major role not only with Puerto Rico Park, but also for assisting Parks and Recreation.

"I get assistance from MVA. It usually depends on how much I ask, but whenever I ask, they are never hesitant to support me. When I request, I justify my request and they approve it—they are very supportive," said Cabrera.

MVA managing director Chris Concepcion said he looks forward to the official opening of the park.

"The Marianas Visitors Authority has agreed to fund the electricity system for the Puerto Rico Park of up to $19,000. We are grateful for our partnership with Capital Improvements Project and others as we move this project forward toward completion," he said.

"We envision this park as a prime recreation area right north of the tourist district of Garapan, where events can be held and community members can partake in various events held year round. It is easily accessible from Garapan by tourists and is also located right by the ocean with priceless views of the Saipan Lagoon and Garapan. We are excited about the eventual opening of Puerto Rico Park," he added.

The groundbreaking ceremony last June 1, 2015, led by late governor Eloy S. Inos and former lieutenant governor Ralph DLG Torres, who is now the governor, officially started the conversion of the Puerto Rico Dump into the Puerto Rico Park.

This is one of the biggest federally funded Capital Improvement Project undertakings for the CNMI, with funding reaching $27 million.

700 PH passports released during 4-day event

Members of the Filipino community rushed over to the JP Center in Garapan last week to get new copies of their Philippine passports, which were recently renewed.

The four-day event distributed passports on Friday, Monday, and Tuesday from 5pm to 8pm and 1pm to 6pm on Saturday, resulting in 700 passports being successfully delivered to their owners.

Glicerio Arago, the Philippines' honorary consul to the CNMI, said, "I'm really happy about the outcome. We tried our best to make everything go as smoothly as possible. People need to understand that those at the site are just volunteers so they have to be a little more patient."

The new passports given out were for those who renewed their expiring passports last October at the Kristo Rai Parish. People had to bring their old passports and their receipt. Some even came in, hoping their November renewals would be available.

Annamae Adaza, a volunteer from the office of the honorary consul, said, "It was fast, some of them were really excited. Even though we informed the public that this was for those who renewed in October, people from last month still came to see if they were included. Even though we advertised it on the radio, television, and newspaper, people would still call just to make sure."

"We feel really happy and the people are so excited about the new design," Adaza said.

The new passports will be valid for five years instead of 10. The possibility of its extension was a suggestion by President Rodrigo Duterte.

Those who missed out on the four-day distribution can still pick up their passports at the TSL Plaza in Garapan. For more information call Mel Santos at 233-6293 or Adaza at 483-5237. ***(Michael T. Santos)***

MICHAEL T. SANTOS

Volunteers help distribute Philippine passports to recipients during the four-day release held at the JP Center on Dec. 20.

Public warned of high surf

Fresh to strong trade winds and combined seas of 9 to 12 feet will produce hazardous conditions for the weekend. A trade-wind disturbance will maintain scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms for Rota, Tinian, and Saipan.

A high surf advisory remains in effect until 6pm Saturday. For east facing reefs, surf will be hazardous at 9 to 11 feet through Saturday. The surf will decrease below hazardous levels

Saturday night. For north facing reefs, surf will be hazardous at 7 to 9 feet through today. The surf will subside below hazardous tonight.

A small craft advisory remains in effect until 6pm Saturday. Fresh to strong trade winds and combined seas of 10 to 12 feet will produce hazardous conditions for operators of small craft the next few days.

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid sailing in these conditions. Avoid venturing near reefs along exposed beaches, especially those facing north and east. Rip currents will be life-threatening. ***(EOC)***

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUT

Happy 13th birthday to Karvin Carl Fernando! Hope your birthday brings you everything you're wishing for. Have a birthday full of surprises and pleasure. We love you! Greetings come from your family. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

RESIDENTIAL, GOVERNMENT & BUSINESS
DISCONNECTION NOTICE

IT&E would like to remind its **RESIDENTIAL, GOVERNMENT & BUSINESS** customers that current billing of accounts are due on or before **Thursday, December 22, 2016** Payments not received by close of business on **Dec 22** will result in temporary suspension of all telephone services after 6:00PM on that day.

To prevent temporary suspension, customers are hereby advised to kindly pay their bills on or before **Thursday, December 22, 2016**. Disputed billings must be brought to IT&E's attention in person or in writing by **Thursday, December 22** Customers must pay any current amount due, to avoid disconnection.

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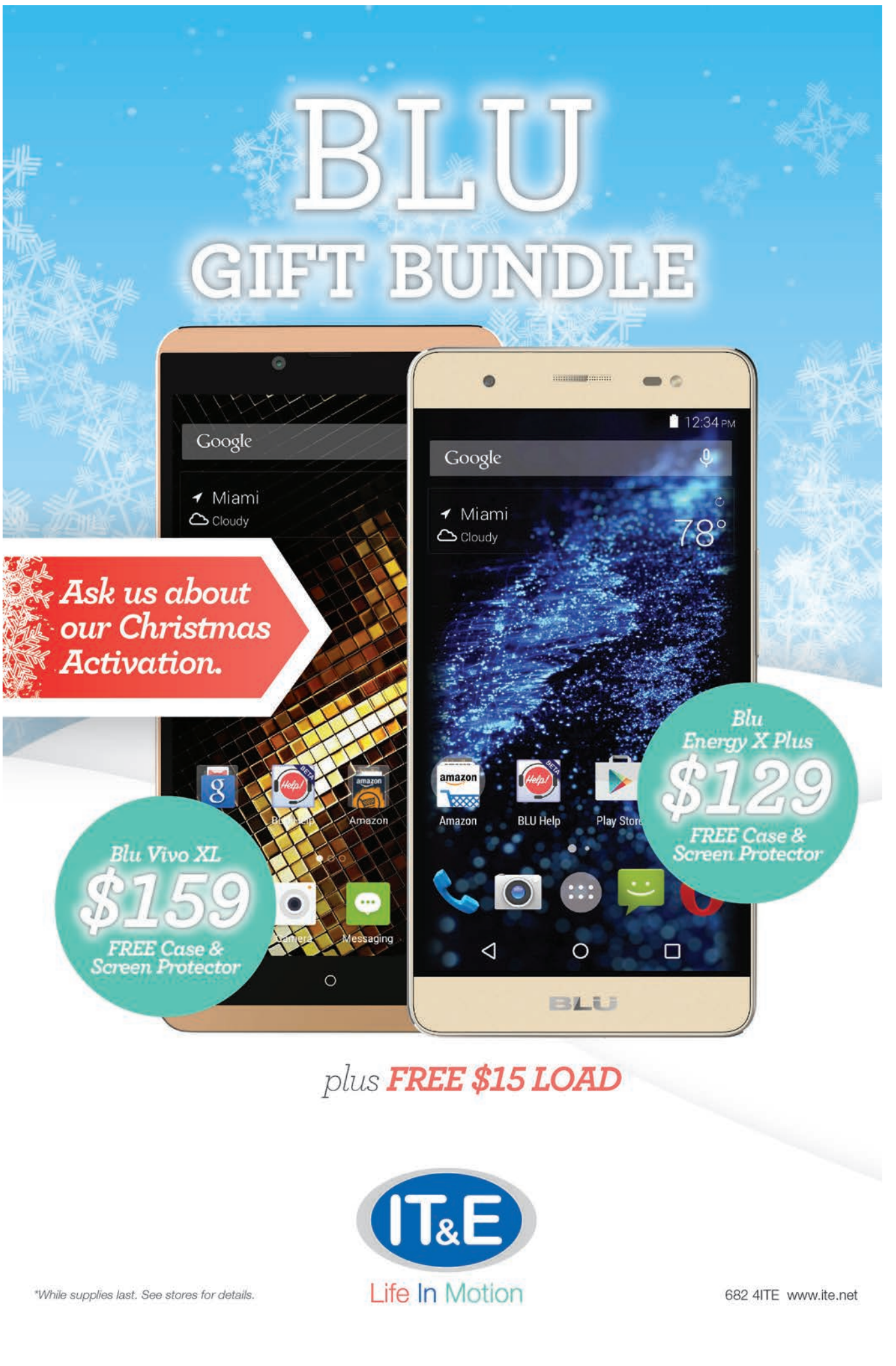
PAY BY PHONE: 682-4ITE (4483)



BOARD of REGENTS

Northern Marianas College

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING

Date: Friday, December 23, 2016
Time: 4:00p.m.
Venue: Board Regents Conference Room
Saipan Campus

ORDER of BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER
- a. Roll Call
- b. Review and Adoption of Agenda

II. PUBLIC COMMENT: Individuals may orally testify on items on the agenda during the Public Comment Period. Written testimony is also accepted. Oral testimonies are limited to five (5) minutes.

III. NEW BUSINESS
- a. Consider to change organizational chart with regards to the Board Secretary position.
- b. President's contract
- c. President evaluation 2016-2017
- d. Board Resolution No. 2016-06 – Honoring the life and contributions of Barry Wonenberg.

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION (At any time during the scheduled meeting of the Board, Regents may be required to enter into executive session to discuss matters deemed privileged and confidential)
- a. Legal Matters
- b. Personnel Matters

V. ADJOURNMENT

/s/ Regent Michael Norita Evangelista
BOR Chairperson

Date: December 23, 2016

WANTED

NEWS REPORTER

The *Saipan Tribune* is looking for a FULL-TIME news reporter.

QUALIFICATIONS
- Above average writing skills and can work within deadlines;
- Fast learner, self-starter, and a team player;
- Computer literate;
- With photography skills;
- Must have reliable means of transportation.

If you have what it takes to be part of a dynamic team, email your résumé and samples of your work to editor@saipantribune.com. You may also drop it off at the *Saipan Tribune* office on the second floor of the JP Center Building on Beach Road, Garapan. ON-ISLAND HIRES PREFERRED.

Saipan Tribune, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer.
Qualified women, minorities, and disabled persons are encouraged to apply.

Golf media professionals visit Saipan

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

At Best Sunshine Live training facility, Bruce Bateman, marketing manager of Marianas Visitors Authority, and David Largent, marketing and public affairs director of Imperial Pacific International, are joined by international golf media team from *Golf Digest* visiting from China, Japan, Korea and Singapore.

From Dec. 4 to 9, 2016, *Golf Digest* international media consortium composed of magazine editors, bloggers, magazine contributors and golf enthusiasts from China, Japan, Korea and Singapore, came to Saipan to experience and enjoy world-class golf courses.

Joined by three locally-based golf players—Yuko Togawa, Kang Seung Woo, and Feng Chun Jin—who provided some local knowledge and golf stories to the group, the guests played at LaoLao Bay east course, Kingfisher Golf Links, Coral Ocean Point Golf Resort, and did a site visit at Marianas Country Club. They enjoyed all the sites around the island, including Managaha Island and Let's Go! Tours. They sampled local cuisine at Boku Boku, Surf Club, Best Sunshine Noodle Bar, Isla Teppanyaki at PIC, Aqua Resort lunch buffet, LaoLao Bay, Kingfisher, Amigo, Loria at Kensington, and Coral Ocean Point Sunday Buffet. The visiting golfers stayed at Kensington Hotel and LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort.

For Imperial Pacific International, this golf tour was organized by David Largent, Marketing and Public Affairs director of Imperial Pacific with the MVA, as part of a larger initiative to bring more quality golfers and customers to Saipan to enjoy our world-class golf courses designed by world-famous golf course designers and players Greg Norman (LaoLao Bay), Graham Marsh (Kingfisher), and Larry Miller (Coral Ocean Point).

Special thanks to the Saipan golf courses and hotels, and to the local golf players who participated, for their full support to MVA.

The Japan-based media personalities included Yoshinubo Shirota, *Golf Digest* writer; Mayuko Sato, *Regina* writer (*Regina* is a Japanese female golf magazine; Shizuo Mori, JPGA; Takashi Ichikura, MVA Japan; Keita Aoki, *Golf Digest* cameraman; and Chiemi Shomizu, *Regina* camerawoman.

Media from Korea were composed of Minsun Chun, *Golf Digest* reporter; and bloggers Jung/ Yong Chul, Chang/Dong Houn, and Oh/ Hyun Tack.

Representatives from China were Jianjie Ma, *Golf Digest* chief editor; Jing Chen, *Golf Digest* vice president; Meifang Hung, key opinion leader/blogger, and Wei Zhou, photographer.

Golf Digest's international journalist Ji Kuang Tan of Singapore also was part of the visiting international media. ***(PR)***

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Transfer station, landfill schedule

The Lower Base transfer station and the Marpi landfill will be closed on Monday, Dec. 26, 2016, and on the following Monday, Jan. 2, 2017. Both Christmas Day (Dec. 25, 2016), and New Year's Day (Jan. 1, 2017) fall on a Sunday. When a CNMI legal holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday is designated as the day of observance. ***(PR)***

'Marianas-chan' auditions

The Marianas Visitors Authority will hold open auditions on Jan. 7, 2017, on Saipan for "Marianas-chan" (Marianas child) to help promote the Northern Mariana Islands in Japan. The contest is open to U.S. citizen children ages 4-6 who reside in the CNMI. Additional details and applications are available at www.mymarianas.com, and the deadline to apply is Dec. 30, 2016. Interested contestants from Tinian and Rota are invited to submit an application with a 1-2 minute video of the contestant to info@mymarianas.com for call back to the audition. For more information, contact the MVA at 1.670.664.3200/01. ***(MVA)***

Survivors, caregivers support meeting

All people facing cancer, their family members, and caregivers are invited to the next Commonwealth Cancer Association monthly support meeting on Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016, starting at 5:30pm at the Hyatt Regency Saipan's Chamolinian Room. To RSVP or for more information, call CCA at 682-0050 or email at ccamarianas@gmail.com or cca@ccamarianas.org. ***(PR)***

Air force training at Warning Area 517

ASAN, Guam—The U.S. Air Force will conduct training at Warning Area 517 on Dec. 22, from 8:30am to 10pm. The public, especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators are advised to stay clear of the areas during the date and times indicated. W-517 is activated south of latitude 12° 40' 00»N. All vessels are advised to remain clear of W-517 south of latitude 12° 40' 00"N. Santa Rosa Reef and Galvez Bank are open for public use. ***(PR)***

TOP SIS STUDENT NAMED A COCA-COLA SCHOLAR SEMIFINALIST

Hwang chosen for next level in prestigious scholarship program

ATLANTA—Cerinn Hwang, a student at Saipan International School, has been named a semifinalist for the 2017 class of the Coca-Cola Scholars Program. With the 2016 class, the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation will have provided more than 5,700 scholars nationwide with over $66 million in scholarships.

"As a premier scholarship provider, we recognize our role in helping young people achieve their college goals," said Mark Davis, president of the foundation. "The economy continues to affect many students' ability to attend the college of their choice, so it is critical we continue to stay the course. The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation received nearly 86,000 applications this year, and the semifinalists are truly some of the most accomplished students in the country."

Hwang ranks with approximately 1,900 high school seniors who are in the running for 150 college scholarships worth $20,000 each and is the only semifinalist in the CNMI. Students are selected to advance to this next phase based on academic excellence, leadership and service demonstrated in school and community activities. The class of 2017 Coca-Cola Scholars will mark the 29th consecutive year that the foundation has awarded scholarships.

Saipan International School's Cerinn Hwang has been named a semifinalist for the 2017 class of the Coca-Cola Scholars Program.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

In addition to receiving college scholarships, those students selected as Coca-Cola Scholars will be welcomed into a vibrant and growing family of alumni that fosters lasting connections with its members. No other scholarship program maintains such lifetime connections or nurtures such a unique culture. Coca-Cola Scholar alumni stay in touch through regional councils, special events, and though their local Coca-Cola bottling facilities. In 2006, a Coca-Cola Scholar Alumni Advisory Board was created to build on the efforts of the Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation through networking, mentoring, collaborations and friendships in order to make an even greater positive impact together.

The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation, a joint effort of Coca-Cola Bottlers across America and The Coca-Cola Company, is one of the largest corporate-sponsored, achievement-based scholarship programs of its kind in the United States. The program recognizes a diverse group of extraordinary high school seniors who have demonstrated academic and civic excellence in their schools and communities.

The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation was created in 1986 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Coca-Cola and to establish a legacy for the education of tomorrow's leaders through college scholarships.

Find the full list of semifinalists from across the country at www.coca-colascholars.org. ***(PR)***

Bordallo supports Hoyer's push for delegate voting in Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo (D-GU) issued the following statement yesterday in support of Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer's letter to House Rules Committee Chairman Pete Sessions asking that the delegates from the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands, as well as the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico, be allowed to cast votes in the Committee of the Whole House.

Bordallo testified before the House Committee on Rules, Subcommittee on Rules and Organization of the House in September of this year to request this change. She also supported previous House Resolutions sponsored by Hoyer during the 112th, 113th, and 114th Congresses to grant voting rights to the delegates in the Committee of the Whole.

"I thank our Democratic Whip, Congressman Steny Hoyer, for again urging the Republican Majority to amend the Rules of the House to permit the delegates from the territories and D.C. to vote in the Committee of the Whole. Whip Hoyer has been a firm supporter of the territories, and I appreciate his consistent leadership in working to ensure that votes cast in the House reflect the voices of all Americans. I testified before the Rules Committee in September to encourage this rule change, and I believe that doing so would allow the territories' voices to be heard more fully during debate on the House floor. It would give us parity with other members and strengthen the long-cherished values of the House." ***(PR)***

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Please be advised that our Weekend Food Fair be closed on December 23rd and 24th due to private functions. Enjoy your Holiday Season.
The Weekend Food Fair will reopen on December 30th.
Thank you for your continued patronage.

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Christmas in the Marianas on Dec. 23

Holiday revelers are reminded that this week's Christmas in the Marianas will be held on Friday, Dec. 23, from 5pm to 10pm at Paseo de Marianas in downtown Garapan.

Due to Christmas Eve falling on a Saturday, the annual celebration organized by the Marianas Visitors Authority, PDM Promoters, Inc., and Team PDI, will be held a day earlier than usual, on Friday.

Festivities will kick off at 5pm with Saipan Awadaori Japanese dance performance at the pedestrian mall, Green Meadows School at 5:30pm, Santiago Siblings at 6:30pm, Uncle Ben's Music & Dance School at 7pm, 29/11 at 8pm, and Southern Warriors at 8:30pm.

Last Saturday, organizers awarded nearly $20,000 in educational tax credit donations from local businesses to schools for various contests. Winning first place and $5,000 for the Christmas tree decorating contest was Green Meadow Schools. Winning first place and $1,000 for the elementary level caroling contest was Oleai Elementary School. Northern Marianas International School won first place and $1,000 for the middle school caroling contest. Saipan Southern High School won first place and $1,000 for the high school skit contest. GTC Elementary School won first place and $1,000 for the parade float competition.

"The outpouring of support from the schools and local businesses are what makes Christmas in the Marianas a success," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "It's hard work, but a genuine pleasure to put on this event each year in collaboration with the schools.

MVA

Students display their Christmas costume made from recyclable and natural material during the Marianas Visitors Authority's Christmas in the Marianas at Paseo de Marianas on Dec. 17, 2016.

This year, we extend a special *un dangkulu na si yu'us ma'ase yan olomwaay* (thank you very much) to all the local businesses who have given so generously in prize money to make this a merry Christmas for all the participating schools."

Donors included T Galleria, TSL Foundation, RNV Construction, Kinpachi, Japan Saipan Travel Association, Country House, Moby Dick, Furusato, S.P.E. Saipan, Inc., Misa Enterprises Inc., KKMP, Power 99, Pacific Development, Inc., and MVA.

The monthlong Christmas in the Marianas offers weekly holiday entertainment for visitors and residents with live entertainment, food and games. The final night will be next Friday, Dec. 30, with more live entertainment and the Mochitsuki Festival, showcasing the traditional Japanese preparation of "mocha" (pounded rice) in preparation for the new year.

During the evening, applications for the MVA's Marianas-*chan* (Marianas child) audition will also be available at the MVA information booth near the stage. On Jan. 7, 2017, the MVA will audition for Marianas-*chan* ages 4-6 to represent the Northern Mariana Islands in select promotions in Japan. The application deadline is Dec. 30, 2016.

For more information on the event, contact MVA Community Projects specialist Ryan Calvo at rcalvo@mymarianas.com or 664-3200/1 or visit www.mymarianas.com. ***(MVA)***

MVA

Green Meadow School representatives celebrate their first place win in the Christmas tree decorating contest at the Marianas Visitors Authority's Christmas in the Marianas celebration on Dec. 17, 2016.

MVA

Students display their Christmas costume made from recycled and natural material during the Marianas Visitors Authority's Christmas in the Marianas at Paseo de Marianas on Dec. 17, 2016.

MVA

Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School created a polar express train for the Marianas Visitors Authority's Christmas in the Marianas Parade in Garapan, Saipan on Dec. 17, 2016.

The Marianas Visitors Authority's float glows during the Christmas in the Marianas Parade on Dec. 17, 2016, in Garapan, Saipan.

BEACH CLEANUP

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Employees of Shirley's Coffee Shop and Restaurant perform a beach cleanup on Dec. 17, 2016, from Sandy Beach Homes up to Aquarius Beach Tower.

Man'amko give concert preview at Legislature

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

JON PEREZ
Several *man'amko* serenaded members of the Legislature and their staff last Monday at the House chamber.

Commonwealth lawmakers and their staff got a much-needed holiday boost on Monday, with the *man'amko* serenading them for a sneak peek of the *man'amko*'s concert on Wednesday night and their way of saying thank you to the work legislators have done the whole year.

This is the third year for the *man'amko* to sing Christmas carols to the legislators, who then hosted them for lunch. Vice speaker Joseph P. Deleon Guerrero (Ind-Saipan) started the annual tradition.

"It gives us something to talk about, we have to practice for our legislators. We just want to go out and visit different facilities and offices. We're happy for all the help they [Legislature] give. We just want to appreciate the hard work they do since they are making critical decisions," said Office on Aging director Walter Manglona.

"Some of our elderly feel that they [lawmakers] also deserve to have a break. Coming up here and singing to them was our special way of thanking them. We're happy that they are committed in giving back to our elders. We are thankful for their continuing support to our *man'amko*."

Manglona said they look past the donations, food, and hosting by the Legislature to the love and thought the lawmakers and their staff give the *man'amko*. "We're really fortunate that they took care of our *man'amko*."

Deleon Guerrero said that playing host to the *man'amko* is also their way of having them showcase their talents and also their gesture of thanks. "We're busy the entire year. We can appreciate our elders and the things they have done for raising us right. This is our way to also say thank you. It's also an opportunity for them to showcase their talents through Christmas songs and dances."

The *man'amko* also used the event as a fundraising activity. "They also do a little bit of fundraising. They use a Santa hat and pass it around," said Deleon Guerrero.

He added that the Legislature wants the event to become an annual tradition, "where every Christmas, we here at the Legislature, be entertained and host them."

Lawmakers and their staff also offered songs to the *man'amko* after their performance.

Manglona said there are close to 400 elderly under the Office on Aging's program, with Pedro Dela Cruz among the oldest. "He's a strong guy and it is always nice to see our elders in high spirits."

NMPASI welcomes four new board members

After a protracted search for new members, the Northern Marianas Protective and Advocacy Systems Inc.'s executive committee concluded its search for new members representing the island of Saipan. Selection of members for the islands of Rota and Tinian is still forthcoming.

Each of the four new members comes with direct, personal experience with issues surrounding the issues and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Joan Taitano: Joan Taitano is no stranger to NMPASI as she has served on NMPASI's PAIMI Advisory Council since 2008. Having been diagnosed with bipolar disorder since 1998, she says that she was, "fortunate enough that she found great community support and has been able to overcome (her) behavioral health issues." She credits various agencies including CHC, CGC, TLC, SSS, OVR and NMPASI for helping her to successfully manage her behavioral health issues and for helping to educate her about her mental illness. "After years of seclusion, I was hired [with OVR assistance] by the Torres Brothers, LLC…because of their faith and trust in me, I had enough courage to go back to school and get a paralegal degree." She received her associates of arts degree in paralegal studies and graduated *cum laude* in July 2014. Currently, she is six classes shy of obtaining a bachelor of science degree. She believes that recovery is possible through education, empowerment, and community support.

Taitano

Demapan

John Demapan: According to the Council on Developmental Disabilities director Pam Sablan, "John is a remarkable young man and self-advocate. He cares deeply about disability issues and the rights of individuals with disabilities to have equal opportunities to work, go to college and to have the choice to make their own decisions regarding their lives." He served on the CDD for two terms wherein he was named vice chairperson and during which he was able to be a co-presenter at the Allies in Self-Advocacy Summit regarding state themes in self-advocacy in the Commonwealth. At present, Demapan works as a transit information specialist for the Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority and was previously a police dispatcher for the Department of Public Safety. He graduated from Saipan Southern High School in June 2006.

Rivera

Charlie Rivera: In his own words, Rivera says, "I was a victim of polio at 1 year old which affected my lower extremity. However, it did not affect my confidence and strong determination to pursue higher education…With loving support from my family, I have learned to be independent and to confidently face every challenge that comes my way." He currently works as a graphic artist with Tropical Instant Press, Inc. (an affiliate of Joeten Enterprises). He expects to be a productive contributor to NMPASI and wants to use his own experience to "share and be able to encourage people with disabilities." He graduated from Ateneo de Naga University in the Philippines in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in Development Communications and holds a certificate in drafting technology through the Naga College Foundation.

Fitial

Emet Fitial: Also a self- advocate, Fitial serves as the chairman of the State Independent Living Council, secretary for the State Rehabilitation Council, and volunteers at the Center for Living Independently. Through his volunteer work, he has been able to present on the role of independent living centers and other issues relating to the needs of people with disabilities on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. He graduated from Marianas High School in 1996.

A veteran member of the NMPASI board said: "This transition of members should be seen as an opportunity to bring fresh new ideas to the board and to develop a new batch of aggressive advocates on behalf of our community of people with disabilities. And so, the expectation, at a minimum, is that these new members contribute and do as much as they can in pursuit of our mission, 'To protect the civil, legal and human rights of people with disabilities.'" ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Newly selected board of director members for the Northern Marianas Protection & Advocacy Systems, Inc. undergo initial orientation for their new roles at the NMPASI office. In this photo, from left, Charlie Rivera, Joan Taitano, John Demapan, and Emeterio Fitial.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

How did a common conifer come to symbolize the season?

Some holiday traditions are easy to understand:

A feast on Thanksgiving to recall our Pilgrim forebears.

Fireworks on the Fourth of July to express exuberant pride. Flags on Memorial Day to honor Americans who died in wars.

But Christmas trees? That's a puzzle on more grounds than one. There's no mention of festive trees in the Bible story about the birth of Jesus. Nor do they make a lot of practical sense. They're expensive, they don't last long and they present a disposal problem afterward.

Comedian Jim Gaffigan is among those mystified that this time of year, "We go out and chop down a tree and put it in our living room. Kinda sounds like the behavior of a drunk man, really."

A couple of centuries ago, most Americans might have agreed. But today, nothing symbolizes the holiday more than a brightly decorated evergreen.

Every year, more than 30 million real trees are sold in the United States, most of them pines or firs. That's along with nearly 10 million artificial ones. There's a whole industry attached: Upward of a million acres of land in this country are used for Christmas tree farms.

So how did this odd custom take root, so to speak? The early immigrants from Europe didn't pay much attention to Christmas, which they regarded as a pagan event. Puritan Massachusetts actually outlawed celebrations, with offenders subject to fines. It didn't become a federal holiday until 1870.

And Christmas trees? They emerged in the 16th century in Germany, and came along with the millions of German immigrants who arrived on these shores during the 19th century. The trend got a boost from Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, whose fondness for Christmas trees made them all the rage in England.

By 1858, the *Hartford Daily Courant* was waxing eloquent about "Christmas trees, resplendent with red and golden gifts." But they had critics all along. In 1883, an editorial in *The New York Times* noted hopefully a decline in the popularity of "the German Christmas Tree—a rootless and lifeless corpse."

The origins go back further yet, to ancient tree worship and pagan rituals tied to the winter solstice. Legend has it that St. Boniface appropriated trees for Christmas back in the 7th century, putting a pre-Christian tradition in the service of Christianity.

By now, of course, the tradition has outgrown that adopted purpose. Even many non-Christians join in putting up Christmas trees, decorating them and surrounding them in wrapped gifts.

And why wouldn't they? There's nothing to evoke the holiday spirit like the scent of pine, the twinkle of lights and the merging of the natural world with hearth and home. That's why the Christmas tree caught on, and why it has endured. St. Boniface, you were on to something.

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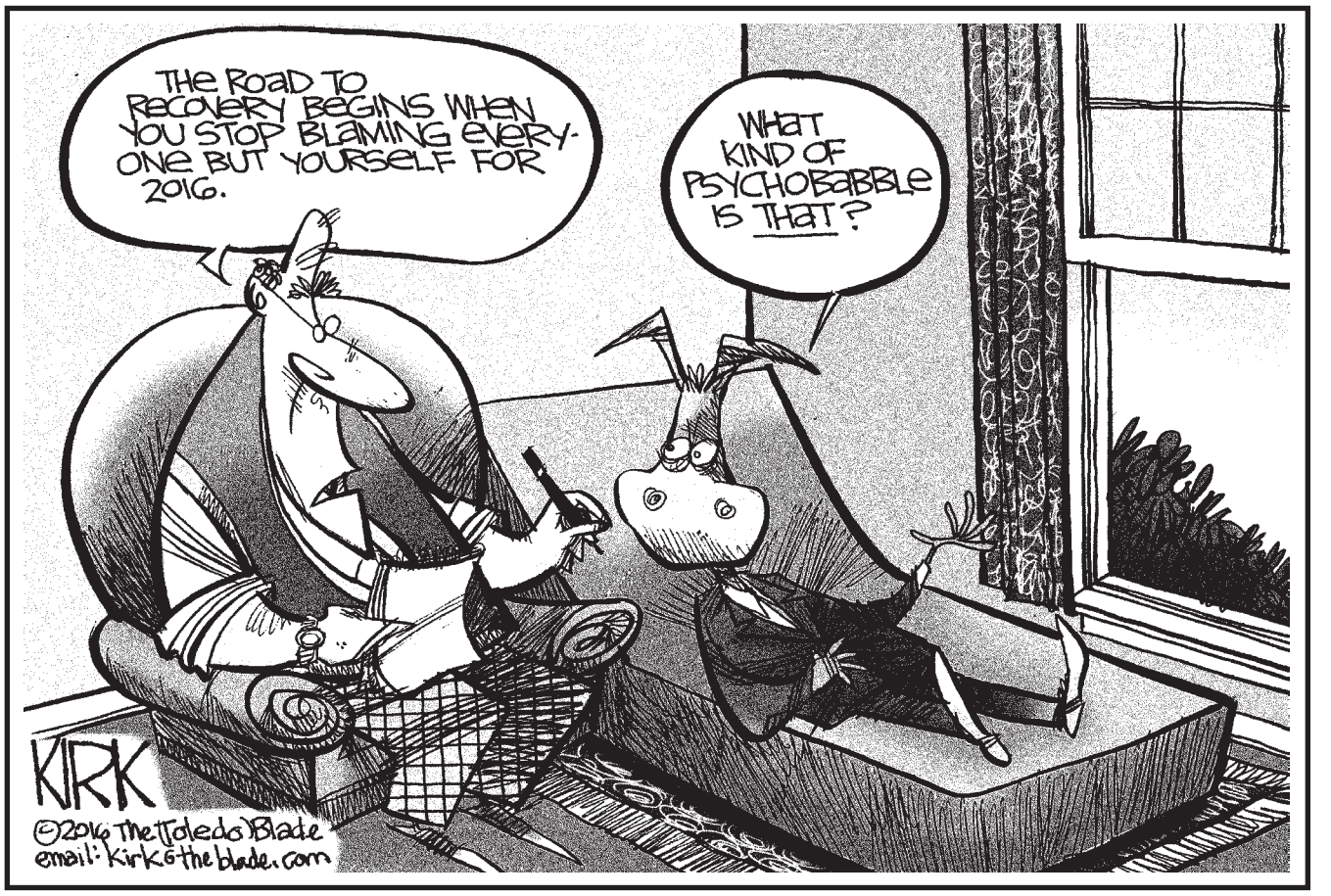
THE ROAD TO RECOVERY BEGINS WHEN YOU STOP BLAMING EVERY-ONE BUT YOURSELF FOR 2016.
WHAT KIND OF PSYCHOBABBLE IS THAT?
KIRK
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email: kirk@theblade.com

Feeling like a Grinch? Remember Seuss' message

By MARK A. NOON
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Christmas can wear you out, and the stress and frayed nerves make you wonder why you go through the pretense of it all. Don't despair, though. That yuletide soul-searching can inspire—to quote one of the most-loved holiday stories—a "wonderful, awful idea."

One morning on the day after Christmas, Theodor (aka: Dr. Seuss) Geisel, the author of "The Cat in the Hat," "Green Eggs and Ham" and a host of other children's classics, felt disheartened, convinced he had lost the meaning of the holiday.

Geisel realized that his gloomy mood mirrored the attitude of a disagreeable creature he created a few years earlier—the Grinch. Thus, an idea for another book was born, one that could help him rediscover the truth about Christmas.

His work on "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" would not be complete until he joined forces with animator Chuck Jones, famous for his Looney Tunes shorts, and the celebrated horror actor Boris Karloff. When "The Grinch" made its television debut on Dec. 18, 1966, it became so popular that a new word was added to the holiday lexicon.

Even after a half-century, "The Grinch" has few detractors, even when considered in a cultural context. Take, for example, the annual "war on Christmas" debates, epitomized by arguments over wishing someone a "Merry Christmas" vs. "Happy Holidays." In the perceived divide over religious and secular holiday celebrations, "The Grinch" has a unique ability to satisfy both camps.

"The Grinch" is often described as secular. The program never mentions the birth of Jesus. In fact, a direct reference to Scripture would have been out of place among the peculiar, insect-like residents of Whoville and their Tah Tinkers, Floo Floobers, Bizzel Binks and Dafflers. Geisel even commented that he had a hard time finding the right note to end his Christmas tale because he did not want to make it a "religious tract." Concluding that "The Grinch" is theologically silent, however, is a mistake.

Anyone willing to risk falling into the trap of overanalyzing Dr. Seuss' books might begin by noting that they have often been used to teach Christian doctrine, even though Geisel did not consider himself a highly religious person. Still, he was steeped in Christianity while growing up in Springfield, Mass.

Geisel not only attended his mother's Episcopal church but his father's Lutheran congregation. His earliest experiences of Christmas came when he joined the other members of the town's German-American community to sing "Stille Nacht" and "O Tannenbaum." Later, at Dartmouth and Oxford, he participated in chapel services.

He was drawn to church in part by hymns and their use of rhyme and repetition. One particular hymn seems significant. He memorized "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty," including the final lines, "God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity." Perhaps Geisel recalled the song's numerical reference when he depicted the Grinch's conversion in the book:

"And he puzzled three hours, till his puzzler was sore.

Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before

"Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store."

The importance of three hours in the New Testament goes without saying. Two pages later, the Grinch's heart grows "three sizes" as Christmas' true meaning dawned on him, a point magnified—literally—in the animated cartoon.

Geisel was reportedly a perfectionist who selected words with extreme care. If he sought to give his readers and viewers a concise, subtle reminder of the spiritual nature of Christmas—that God became flesh and dwelt among men—he called up the right number. In the Bible, three represents the presence of God.

Christian imagery is used to the same effect in the cartoon. As the Whos sing "Welcome Christmas" in the cartoon's climactic scene, they form a circle around a rising star—a clear reminder of the Star of Bethlehem in the Nativity narrative.

Ultimately, Christmas morning in Whoville provides a lesson for everyone, whether the holiday is approached from a religious perspective, a secular one, or, most likely, a combination of both. All the Whos have faith and know in their hearts that they have something that can never be stolen. And Geisel seems to emphasize their diversity—young, old, tall and small. No one is kept away from the celebration. Even the green guy whose burglary spree left the Whos' houses with nothing but hooks and wire is welcomed.

As the Grinch ends his descent down Mount Crumpit, the Whos open their circle unconditionally. There is no protest over what he had done. No retribution. No questions asked. This holiday season could be happier if more people imitated this capacity for forgiveness.

This sense of harmony could be what Geisel was missing on the morning he first imagined "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." He certainly longed for it. One of his earliest commentaries on Christmas was an illustrated poem published in Collier's Magazine on Dec. 23, 1955. "A Prayer for a Child" describes a child's Christmas wish to God:

"Please tell all men

That Peace is good.

That's all

That need be understood.

As a year highlighted by division starts to close and we deal with the stresses of the Christmas rush, look for those moments of peace. It's what the Grinch found as he carved the roast beast. And, no, Dr. Seuss would not mind—not in the least.

Mark A. Noon is an assistant professor of English at Bloomsburg University in Bloomsburg, Pa. Readers may send him email at mnoon@bloomu.edu. He wrote this for The Philadelphia Inquirer.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

THE CONSUMER CAUTION CORNER

3 ways to avoid scams this holiday season

By MICHAEL J. CYGANEK
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

This week, the Office of the Attorney General's "Consumer Caution Corner" sets out three "rules of thumb" that, if practiced, will better protect you and your loved ones this holiday season from Grinches that seek to scam people during this generous time of year:

1) Know how NOT to pay.

Is someone asking you to pay with an iTunes or Amazon gift card? Or telling you to wire money through services like Western Union or MoneyGram? Don't do it. Scammers ask you to pay in ways that let them get the money fast — and make it nearly impossible for you to get it back. If you're doing any holiday shopping online, know that credit cards have a lot of fraud protection built in.

2) Spot imposters.

Imposters pretend to be someone you trust to convince you to send money or personal information. They might say you qualified for a free government grant, but you have to pay a fee to get it. Or they might send phishing emails that seem to be from your bank asking you to "verify" your credit card or checking account number. Don't buy it.

3) Make sure your money goes to real charities.

The holidays are an important time to share with people in need. Unfortunately, sometimes charity scammers try to take advantage of your good will. Always check out a charity before you give.

Each week, the Office of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Education Program (a.k.a. "The Consumer Caution Corner") aims to provide consumers and businesses with the "know-how" tools to identify and protect themselves from unfair trade practices and marketplace schemes.

Consumer protection complaint forms can be picked up at the Office of the Attorney General located on Capital Hill.

Michael J. Cyganek is consumer counsel at the Office of the Attorney General. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a consumer or your obligations as a business under the CNMI Consumer Protection Act, please contact the consumer counsel by email at michael_cyganek@cnmioag.org.

Who will you be for the holidays?

By GINA BARRECA
The Hartford Courant

Gina Barreca is an English professor at the University of Connecticut and the author of If You Lean In, Will Men Just Look Down Your Blouse? *and eight other books. She can be reached at www.ginabarreca.com.*

Who will you be this Christmas? What are you going as this Hanukkah? How are you going to dress for Kwanzaa? Do you have a groovy getup for Festivus?

Since major holidays rarely encourage us to be ourselves, here are a few suggestions for official costumes.

I predict this season's top sellers will be:

■ The disgruntled voter. Both winners and losers from the latest election cycle are fighting over who looks better in this one-size-fits-all design. A version of a political Snuggie, the disgruntled voter outfit will wrap you up in bitterness and make it difficult to shift your position. It keeps you fully insulated and makes staying exactly where you are astonishingly easy. It permits its wearer to burrow even more deeply into place without any distractions when outfitted with headphones that can be tuned either to Fox News or MSNBC. (Fake news sources are also available for a price: The price is the cost of your soul.) It keeps its wearer in a larva-like state before and after the holiday transition period.

■ TV series aficionado. You will recognize this costume by its trademark black T-shirt, tight pants and short boots. This TVSA will explain why "The Affair," "Westworld," "Black Mirror," "The Night Of," "Stranger Things," "Crazy Ex-Girlfriend" and "Transparent" are great shows but will not permit you to discuss "Modern Family," "The Crown" or that really funny old episode of "The Simpsons" where Marge buys the Chanel suit. They'll explain why those shows could have been better with more sophisticated showrunners, writers, costumers and editors. When asked, the indefatigable TVSA will discuss their own experience in "the industry," which was a three-month internship several years ago. They will also discuss that experience when not asked.

■ The American. Regardless of political party, we could all do as my friend Barbara Cooley says she'll do and go as an American. According to Barbara, although her American outfit doesn't necessarily include wearing red, white, and blue, it does include "appreciating what each brings to the table, treating them all with respect and pretending to live in a free country without a Cabinet full of deplorables. It also includes drinking plenty of wine. Plenty. Of. Wine."

If you can't go as an American, you could, as my friend Dave Hanley suggests, always go dressed as a good buddy of the new president-elect: "I'm going as Putin. He seems to get what he wants for the holidays." (I figured Hanley is already on an FBI list somewhere, so I felt comfortable putting this in.)

■ The perfectionist. The perfectionist will be seen at a distance because she (or he, but usually she) will always be somewhere dimly lit, wiping crumbs or dust from a counter. If you're lucky, she might also be putting glasses on coasters.

(Why don't people use coasters? I have 2,336 coasters in my house, and when we have people over, maybe four of my sophisticated friends will use them. The rest of them will put their wet glasses down right next to these coasters. Why does this always happen? I'm asking a serious question here, and I am not a perfectionist. Now back to our regularly scheduled column.)

■ The philatelist. It's an excellent costume for those who wish to be left alone. Other guests will come up to you and ask, "What are you doing these days?" When you answer "I'm still a philatelist," they will back away slowly. Not many people know that a philatelist is a stamp collector. This means you'll be able to sit unbothered, even next to the best hors d'oeuvres. It also means that small sticky children will be kept away from you.

■ The young adult who brings a pet (and not as a side dish) is a best-seller. Snappy dogs, wily ferrets and macaws that want to tell you about their time in the "The Industry" (TVSA, anyone?) are now, if not popular, then at least familiar.

■ The most popular costume of all is my pal Jennifer Cail's: "A harried mom trying to honor all of the religious, cultural and dietary traditions in the family. Like all good garments, my hair shirt goes with everything."

Whatever outfit you choose this holiday, remember to wear a smile.

Trump's corporate Cabinet looks like plutocracy

By ANDRES OPPENHEIMER
Miami Herald

Andres Oppenheimer is a columnist for the Miami Herald. *Readers may email him at aoppenheimer@miamiherald.com.*

President-elect Donald Trump has picked a Cabinet dominated by business tycoons with no government experience or patience for history lessons. In other words, he will be surrounded by people like himself.

There is nothing wrong with appointing successful corporate barons, rather than government bureaucrats, to top Cabinet posts: It's an old American tradition.

When President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed GM's chief executive officer Charles Wilson as secretary of defense in 1953, he famously said—or was misquoted as saying—"What's good for General Motors is good for America."

But history has proved that what's good for big corporations is not always good for America. The top priority for corporations—justifiably so—is to make a profit at the end of the year, whereas governments must think long-term, and enforce civil rights and environmental practices to prevent potential disasters decades down the road.

For Secretary of State, he has picked as his nominee Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson, 64, who has spent his entire adult life at the company. His main claim to fame is his close relation with Russia's autocrat Vladimir Putin, who in 2013 awarded him with the Kremlin's Order of Friendship.

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and other human rights groups are horrified by Tillerson's appointment. In addition to his close ties with Russia—which invaded Crimea two years ago and, according to U.S. intelligence officials, hacked this year's U.S. elections—Tillerson has befriended the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Equatorial Guinea and other countries that are among the world's worst human rights offenders.

And environmental groups are just as furious. While Tillerson finally acknowledged in a 2012 speech that CO2 emissions have an impact on global warming, Greenpeace USA says that under his helm, "Exxon oversaw one of the largest and most expensive climate denial campaigns the world has ever seen."

Trump's choice for secretary of commerce is Wilbur Ross, 79, a billionaire who is a vocal critic of NAFTA and other free trade deals. Trump's pick for secretary of labor is CKE Restaurants' CEO Andrew Puzder, 66, a strong critic of raising the minimum wage to $15 an hour and of making more workers eligible for overtime pay.

For energy secretary, Trump nominated former Texas Gov. Rick Perry, 66, who once proposed to eliminate the agency he will now lead if he is confirmed by the Senate. For the Environmental Protection Agency, Trump's choice is Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, 48, a climate change skeptic who has repeatedly filed lawsuits against the office he has been tapped to head.

For secretary of education, Trump picked super wealthy businesswoman and Republican donor Betsy DeVos, 58, a strong supporter of student vouchers for charter schools.

For the Small Business Administration, Trump's choice is former World Wrestling Entertainment CEO Linda McMahon, 68, the wife of billionaire WWE promoter Vincent McMahon. She has supported plans to merge the SBA into another government agency.

My opinion: Far from a government of anti-establishment outsiders who will "clean the swamp," this looks like a plutocracy—a government run by the wealthy—with little knowledge or experience in government affairs, and a huge potential for conflicts of interests.

It will be the most affluent and least diverse Cabinet in recent memory. So far, of Trump's 17 Cabinet-level picks, only five are not white males. MSNBC's anchor Rachel Maddow said that the line of succession for the presidency may now consist of 12 white men.

Trump will be the first president in U.S. history to take office without any government or military service experience. Taking that into account, he would have benefited from putting together a more balanced Cabinet, with more people—aside from a few generals—who have served in public office.

He should have surrounded himself with at least some people who know how to pass laws in Congress, and who have knowledge of the agencies they will be heading. Instead, he appointed people just like him, with his same shortcomings.

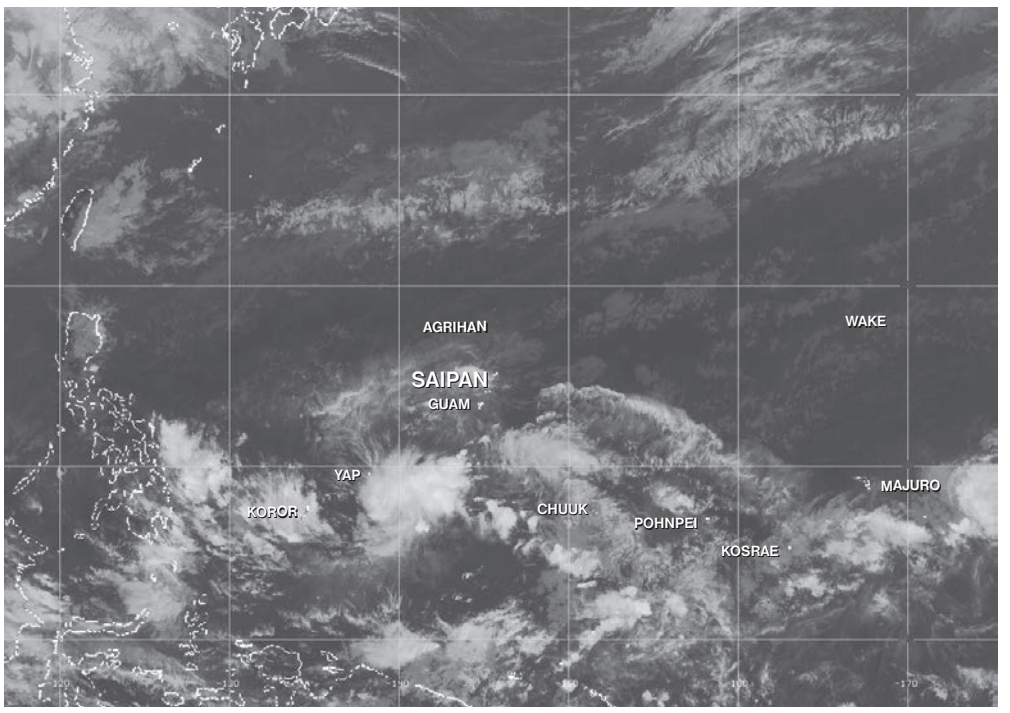
I hope I'm wrong, but his decision to pick a nearly all-corporate Cabinet will come back to haunt him.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers and breezy. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers and breezy. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼79°	▲88° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:29 AM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2016
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

East to Northeast trade-winds and scattered showers prevail across the local area this morning. Breezy conditions will persist across the Marianas through at least Friday.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▼ ▲
Guam and Rota	Mostly cloudy	81 / 85 °F
Palau	Partly sunny	79 / 85 °F
Yap	Heavy rain	78 / 82 °F
Chuuk	Heavy rain	79 / 85 °F
Pohnpei	Mostly cloudy	80 / 86 °F
Kosrae	Morning clouds	81 / 85 °F
Majuro	Mostly cloudy	80 / 84 °F

AROUND THE GLOBE		▼ ▲
Auckland	Partly cloudy	62 / 72 °F
Beijing	Morning clouds	30 / 42 °F
Hong Kong	Morning clouds	64 / 75 °F
Honolulu	Mostly sunny	71 / 80 °F
London	Decreasing cloudiness	39 / 48 °F
Los Angeles	Haze	55 / 69 °F
Manila	Partly cloudy	75 / 89 °F
Melbourne	Sunny	55 / 72 °F
Miami	Partly cloudy	72 / 80 °F
New York	Partly sunny	35 / 44 °F
Osaka	Heavy rain	45 / 62 °F
Paris	Rain	43 / 47 °F
Pusan	Rain	46 / 60 °F
Rome	Partly cloudy	43 / 62 °F
Salem	Light rain	31 / 42 °F
San Francisco	Mostly sunny	45 / 58 °F
Seoul	Heavy rain	36 / 51 °F
Tokyo	Afternoon clouds	47 / 64 °F
Washington, DC	Mostly sunny	30 / 51 °F

NMI CRIME STOPPERS
Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		
1:59 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.27 Feet
7:58 AM	LOW TIDE	0.62 Feet
2:41 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.85 Feet
9:46 PM	LOW TIDE	0.56 Feet

	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:39 AM	5:52 PM
Friday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM
Saturday	6:40 AM	5:53 PM
Sunday	6:40 AM	5:54 PM
Monday	6:41 AM	5:55 PM

	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	12:42 AM	1:00 PM	-
Friday	1:29 AM	1:38 PM	-
Saturday	2:16 AM	2:17 PM	-
Sunday	3:04 AM	2:57 PM	-
Monday	3:51 AM	3:39 PM	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 5, 2016

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA6394	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA6392	8:40am	9:30am	Daily
UA6391	1:30pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA6390	2:20pm	3:10pm	2, 3, 6
UA6398	6:05pm	6:55pm	Daily
UA6396	9:50pm	10:40pm	Daily

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA6391	1:30pm	2:05pm	1, 4, 5, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA6391	2:35pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL297	4:20pm	7:00pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ626	2:20am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
7C3403	4:45am	8:30am	Daily
LJ652	2:10pm	6:05pm	Daily
7C3401	4:00pm	7:45pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	6:35am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/701	2:20am	11:05am	1 via ICN
OZ626/701	2:50am	11:05am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA6394/191	4:15am	8:55am	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
UA6394/PR111	4:15am	9:15am	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
PR1572	5:45am	7:45am	7, 4
UA6391/183	1:30pm	8:50pm	5 via Rota-GUM
UA6391/183	1:30pm	9:10pm	1, 4, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA6391/193	1:30pm	10:35pm	5 via Rota-GUM-ROR
UA6390/183	2:20pm	8:50pm	2 via GUM
UA6390/183	2:20pm	9:10pm	3, 6 via GUM
UA6390/193	2:20pm	10:35pm	2 via GUM-ROR

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX077	2:00am	5:00am	1, 4
OZ626/721	2:20am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA6391/159	1:30pm	9:55pm	1, 5 via Rota-GUM
UA6390/159	2:20pm	9:55pm	3, 6 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA6393	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA6395	7:15am	8:05am	Daily
UA6391	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA6390	12:10pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6 via Rota
UA6397	4:45pm	5:35pm	Daily
UA6399	8:30pm	9:20pm	Daily

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA6390	12:10pm	12:45pm	2, 3, 6

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA6390	1:15pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:30am	3:05pm	Daily

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

LJ651	7:30am	1:10pm	Daily
7C3402	9:30am	3:00pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ625	8:15pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
7C3404	10:10pm	3:40am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:05pm	1:55am+1	3, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:40pm	5:00am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:40pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA190/6397	9:55am	5:35pm	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
OZ702/625	12:15pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/625	12:15pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR1571	10:25pm	4:45am+1	3, 6
UA192/6395	9:45pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via ROR-GUM
PR110/UA6395	10:05pm	8:05am+1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/6395	10:25pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/6395	11:30pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:10pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
HX076	5:30pm	12:30am+1	3, 7
UA116/6395	9:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju Air; HX: Hong Kong Airlines; LJ: Jin Air; ETD: Estimated Time of Departure;ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
6:30AM	6:45AM	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

Pence taps Amata to join Trump's transition team

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Vice President-elect Mike Pence has appointed American Samoa delegate Aumua Amata to the Presidential Transition Team Executive Committee.

"Amata is a great friend and colleague and I am delighted she will be joining our team," said vice chairman Marsha Blackburn, a senior member of Congress from Tennessee, who also serves as vice chairman of the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee. "This decision advances a commitment President-elect Trump made last spring to not forget the territories once elected."

Amata can be expected to be looked to as a key advisor on issues concerning the U.S. territories and Asian Pacific American communities.

As the highest ranking elected Republican federal official of APA heritage and as a Trump delegate to the Republican National Convention last summer, Amata is ideally suited to serve this powerful role within this prominent group of decision-makers.

Having served on President George W. Bush's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and as the current vice chairman of the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indian, Insular and Native Alaskan Affairs, Amata is very familiar with leadership in both the Caribbean and Pacific territories and stateside APA communities.

The Presidential Transition Team Executive Committee is a body composed of national business, government and political leaders who are guiding the work of teams that have been dispatched to the White House and various government departments and agencies to coordinate with current administration officials the smooth handover of the reins of government on Jan. 20. In addition to Blackburn, the Committee includes a number of other members of Congress, incoming White House chief of staff Reince Priebus, and first daughter Ivanka Trump.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Vice President-elect Mike Pence, right, and American Samoa delegate Aumua Amata in the U.S. Capitol last month

"Governor Pence and I discussed this possibility when we met recently, and I'm pleased and honored to be selected by him to join the team," said Amata. "Following my conversation with the VP- elect, I spoke with my good friend Marsha Blackburn who saw the value for the territories and APA communities to have a voice on the Committee."

Last month, Amata was re-elected for a second term to her House seat, having received the most votes for a candidate of any territory-wide office in the history of American Samoa.

Amata first came into office by defeating a 22-year Democrat incumbent, in what has historically been a very "blue" territory. Her selection to the Committee may be the first time a Pacific Islander has been part of the inner circle of a presidential transition. ***(PR)***

Saipan-da to give gifts on Christmas Day

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Saipan-da backpacks will be presented in person by Saipan-da to qualified children arriving on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 2016.

Just like Santa and his helpers, Saipan-da will be on duty Christmas Eve and Christmas Day this year.

As part of its annual Happy Children in Paradise campaign and promotions for the holiday season, the Marianas Visitors Authority will again spread holiday cheer by giving away Saipan-da backpacks to visiting children arriving at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport.

All passengers arriving on Dec. 24 and 25, 2016, will be greeted by Saipan-da and two Chamorritas in island attire. Children ages 12 and younger will receive backpacks of the character.

"Just like Santa, Christmas is one of the busiest times of the year for Saipan-da," said MVA marketing manager Bruce Bateman. "This year's backpack is even more loveable than ever, due to the 2016 design that makes it seem like a stuffed animal. And like Santa, we find that people of all ages enjoy Saipan-da, probably because he is also big, jolly, huggable, and give gifts!"

MVA previously gave away over 10,000 backpacks during the summer phase of Happy Children in Paradise from July through September 2016. Saipan-da is a well-known, panda-like character well-received by children from all the NMI's source markets and designed to keep the destination name in front of potential visitors from Asian countries.***(MVA)***

Building capacity of auditors on public procurement

The controller and auditor-general of Samoa Fuimaono Camillo Afele is hosting the Pacific regional program on compliance audit of public procurement which is part of an international capacity building program developed and delivered jointly by the INTOSAI Development Initiative and the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions.

Twenty-two auditors from Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Pohnpei FSM, Papua New Guinea, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Tuvalu are participating in this weeklong review meeting, which commenced on Dec. 15 and ended on Dec. 20, 2016.

The keynote speaker, Salā Fata Pinati, the minister for Audit Office, formally opened this regional meeting by highlighting the important role that supreme audit institutions play in ensuring accountable and transparent government procurement practices.

"This regional program is the first being delivered in the global INTOSAI region and I am pleased to host it, because the subject matter of public procurement is a significant matter which affects all areas of public service delivery which my office is mandated to do," said Afele.

The program follows the cooperative audit approach with the main objective to support SAIs in moving toward international standards of supreme audit institutions compliance in the conduct of compliance audits. At this review meeting the participating teams obtained feedback from the facilitators/resource persons in relation to their draft audit reports and throughout the week teams were given the opportunity to enhance and improve their draft reports.

The facilitators and resource persons for this review meeting were Md Shofiqul Islam, IDI program manager for PASAI; Ingvild Gulbrandsen, SAI Norway; Ibrahim Aiman, SAI Maldives; Violet Roebeck-Fasavalu, SAI Samoa; and A'eau Agnes Tuiai-Aruwafu, PASAI director Technical Support.

The program, which is part of the global ISSAI implementation initiative or 3i program, spans a period of two years and provides blended support solutions by supporting participants in sustainably enhancing their professional and organizational capacity to audit more effectively public procurement.

PASAI is the overarching regional working group of supreme audit institutions in the Pacific region. It has 28 members that promote transparent and efficient use of public sector resources with the aim to make a difference to the lives of citizens. The IDI acts as the capacity development secretariat of the INTOSAI (International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions), which comprises 192 SAIs. PASAI is a regional organization of INTOSAI, which operates as an umbrella organization for the external government audit community and has a worldwide global affiliation with SAIs around the world.

PASAI acknowledged the financial support and collaborative ongoing joint partnership with IDI and the financial support of the Australian government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, including the Samoa Audit Office. ***(PR)***

Review meeting participants.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Business

Online sites court procrastinators with speedy shipping

ATLANTA (AP)—Forget ordering online weeks in advance or dashing out to the drug store for a gift card on Christmas Eve. Procrastinating holiday shoppers are finding a haven online as retailers ramp up expedited shipping and same-day delivery services.

Far from discouraging last-minute online shoppers, retailers are actually courting them. Amazon is offering a "Procrastinator's Delight" special. Clothing retailer Madewell proclaims on its website that "procrastinators get the best deals"—25 percent off everything, with orders as late as noon Thursday for holiday deliveries.

It's a far cry from 2013, when Amazon and package deliverers misjudged demand and delivered some holiday packages after Christmas . Since then, the Seattle company has added warehouses to be closer to customers. It has also leased jets and trucks to get packages delivered on time—even last-minute orders. Package carriers such as FedEx and UPS have also increased staffing and hired outside contractors for the holiday season.

"So many people are shopping online because it's easier," said Sucharita Mulpuru, chief retail strategist for the ShopTalk retail conference. "They're waiting for last minute because nobody is encouraging them to shop earlier."

AP

In this Monday, Dec. 12, 2016, photo, an online shopper searches a site, while logged in from Miami. Procrastinating holiday shoppers are finding a haven online with expedited shipping and same-day delivery services.

TRUST IN RELIABILITY

If you're an online shopper in the days leading up to Christmas and Hanukkah, be ready to forgo free shipping and shell out for expedited service. Look for sites that offer detailed shipping information. And check where the package is coming from—if it's shipping from China or the U.K., you won't get it in time.

But the extra cost and vigilance is worth it to those seeking to avoid the hassles of jam-packed stores, crowded parking lots and frenzied crowds.

Laura Curtis turned to expedited two-day shopping from Etsy and elsewhere when she realized she needed more gifts for her nieces and nephews.

"I'm usually way done by now," said the writer from Mt. Kisco, New York. But she said she has faith that she'll get her packages on time. "Our FedEx guy is really reliable."

Although a union warned that Amazon might not be able to retain enough pilots under contract to deliver packages through its new airline shipping service, Prime Air, Amazon said it doesn't expect any delays.

SPIRALING DEMAND, MORE SERVICES

The number of holiday packages has been rising each year as more people shop online. Research firm comScore predicts online shopping during the November and December holiday period will rise as much as 19 percent from last year to $81 billion. That compares with an expected 3.6 percent rise in overall shopping during the same period to $656 billion, according to the National Retail Federation, an industry trade group.

That means many more packages each year. UPS predicts global delivery volume during the holidays will rise 14 percent from last year to about 700 million packages. FedEx expects volume to rise about 10 percent.

Go inside UPS Worldport, the world's largest automated package sorting facility, in this AP interactive:

http://apne.ws/2icuTyX

Meanwhile, the number of services for last-minute online orders keeps growing. Amazon has been expanding its Prime Now same-day delivery service, adding nine cities to reach 31 this year. It is using local delivery service providers and regular drivers as on-demand messengers. The service is catering to last-minute shoppers by offering a "Procrastinator's Delight" program that will deliver products up until 11:59 p.m. on Christmas Eve. PetSmart is offering same-day delivery through startup Deliv. Uber is using its network of contract drivers for same-day delivery of goods for small businesses in New York, San Francisco and Chicago.

In addition, Amazon now lets people subscribe to its regular $99-a-year Prime program, which offers free two-day shipping, on a month-by-month basis. That means shoppers can sign up in December to take advantage of free two-day shipping and have the option of canceling the next month.

All this could lead to a rush in last-minute online deliveries.

Trump's commitment to infrastructure vow is being questioned

WASHINGTON (AP)—It's not at all clear that President-elect Donald Trump's plans to spend massively on infrastructure are going to unfold as he promised.

Trump made rebuilding the nation's aging roads, bridges and airports very much part of his job-creation strategy in the presidential race. But lately lobbyists have begun to fear that there won't be an infrastructure proposal at all, or at least not the grand plan they'd been led to expect.

From the day he entered the presidential race to the moment he declared victory, Trump pledged an infrastructure renewal. He cited decaying bridges, potholed roads and airports like New York's LaGuardia that he said reminded him of the "third world."

Trump or his campaign also mentioned schools, hospitals, pipelines, water treatment plants and the electrical grid as part of a job-creation strategy that would make the U.S. "second to none." It was a rare area in which House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and other Democrats hoped for common ground with the president-elect. The possibility of a major infrastructure spending plan is one of several factors that have fueled the recent run-up in stock prices.

But did he mean it?

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell tried to tamp down expectations last week, telling reporters he wants to avoid "a $1 trillion stimulus." And Reince Priebus, who will be Trump's chief of staff, said in a radio interview that the new administration will focus in its first nine months with other issues like health care and rewriting tax laws. He sidestepped questions about the infrastructure plan.

In a post-election interview with The New York Times, Trump himself seemed to back away, saying infrastructure won't be a "core" part of the first few years of his administration. But he said there will still be "a very large-scale infrastructure bill."

He acknowledged that he didn't realize during the campaign that New Deal-style proposals to put people to work building infrastructure might conflict with his party's small-government philosophy.

"That's not a very Republican thing—I didn't even know that, frankly," he said.

Since the election, Trump has backed away—or at least suggested flexibility—on a range of issues that energized his supporters during the campaign, including his promises to prosecute Hillary Clinton, pull out of the Paris climate change accord and reinstitute waterboarding for detainees.

Volkswagen deal gives some diesel car owners buyback option

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Volkswagen reached a deal that will give at least some owners of the remaining 80,000 diesel vehicles caught in the company's emissions cheating scandal the option of a buyback and provide compensation to all of them on top of any repurchase or repairs, U.S. regulators and a federal judge said Tuesday.

The $1 billion settlement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will give owners of 20,000 3-liter diesel cars the choice of a buyback. The figure does not include additional payments to owners.

Volkswagen believes it can bring the other 60,000 vehicles into compliance with pollution regulations and will not offer a buyback if that's the case, U.S. District Judge Charles Breyer said in San Francisco.

The deal includes $225 million the German automaker will contribute to an environmental fund to offset the cars' excess pollution, Cynthia Giles of the EPA said in a conference call with reporters.

Additional compensation for car owners will be substantial, according to the judge, but he did not provide a figure and said the sides still had more work to do.

"I am optimistic the parties will resolve the remaining issues," Breyer said, without elaborating on what was left to be done.

The settlement was a major step toward rectifying lawsuits stemming from the global scandal that erupted last year, damaging Volkswagen's reputation and hurting its sales. The company previously reached a nearly $15 billion deal for 475,000 2-liter diesel cars also programmed to cheat on emissions tests.

Hinrich J. Woebcken, president and CEO of Volkswagen Group of America Inc., said the agreement announced Tuesday was part of Volkswagen's "efforts to make things right" for its customers.

"We are committed to earning back the trust of all our stakeholders and thank our customers and dealers in the United States for their patience as the process moves forward," he said in a statement.

The deal protects the environment "by removing the cars from road and by offsetting harmful emissions that resulted from their cheating," said Giles with the EPA.

STOCK PORTFOLIO

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW	S&P	NASDAQ
19,974.62	2,270.76	5,483.94
+91.56	+8.23	+26.50
0.46%	0.36%	0.49%

EXCHANGE RATES

In U.S. dollar terms

Australian Dollar	1.3777	Hong Kong Dollar	7.7642	Russian Ruble	61.277
British Pound	0.8081	Indian Rupee	67.857	Singapore Dollar	1.4451
Canadian Dollar	1.3369	Japanese Yen	117.673	South Korean Won	1192.9
Chinese Yuan	6.9508	Malaysian Ringgit	4.4795	Swiss Franc	1.0283
Euro	0.961	New Zealand Dollar	1.4434	Taiwan Dollar	32.007
		Philippine Peso	49.97	Thailand Baht	36

Nation

Trump family drops access offered for charity donations

WASHINGTON (AP)—Donald Trump's children may see his move to the White House as a way to raise money for their favorite causes.

Two recent fundraising pitches featuring the incoming first family were meant to benefit charities, but they also raised questions among ethics experts that the Trumps might be inappropriately selling access.

Last week, Eric Trump tried auctioning a coffee date with his sister Ivanka to raise money for a children's hospital. Now, Eric and Donald Trump Jr. are part of a venture that initially offered a private reception with their father during inauguration weekend in exchange for $1 million donations that would go to conservation charities. Some of those contributors could later go hunting or fishing with one or both of the sons, the invitation promised.

These events are dissolving as quickly as they become public, suggesting the family is learning on the fly what's acceptable.

Trump aides say the Trump family has been focused on resolving the perception of conflicts when it comes to Trump's business; how to handle their charitable endeavors has been a secondary concern. But in light of recent events, the Trump team is looking more quickly for solutions, said a Trump transition official, speaking on condition of anonymity to share internal discussions.

Eric Trump canceled the coffee with Ivanka after *The New York Times* reported that some of the bidders were doing so to gain insight about the Trump administration.

Hope Hicks, a Trump spokeswoman, said the hunting and fishing events reflected "initial concepts that have not been approved or pursued by the Trump family." She added that the sons "are not involved in any capacity. Additionally, the president-elect is not aware of the event or the details pertaining to it."

The two previous presidents, Barack Obama and George W. Bush, expressly forbade immediate family members from such fundraising activities to avoid the appearance of selling access.

"We kept it simple. We did not allow the first family to be auctioned off, which is what is happening here," said Norman Eisen, who served as White House chief ethics counselor as Obama took office in 2009.

Richard Painter, who filled a similar role for Bush, said the White House "strongly discouraged" the president, his family and top aides from fundraising for charities, and avoided altogether charity fundraising that came with any access to those people.

AP

In this Sunday, Oct. 9, 2016 file photo, from left, Melania Trump, Ivanka Trump, Eric Trump and Donald Trump, Jr. wait for the second presidential debate between Donald Trump and Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton at Washington University in St. Louis.

Both said that while there's nothing explicitly illegal about the charity fundraising, it diverges from the best practices of previous White House administrations.

In an invitation that began circulating last week when the entertainment site TMZ posted it, Eric and Donald Trump Jr. were listed as honorary co-chairmen for a group seeking up to $1 million donations for a Jan. 21 inauguration event dubbed "Opening Day."

Top donors could enjoy other perks such as a "private reception and photo opportunity for 16 guests with President Donald J. Trump" and "a multi-day hunting and/or fishing excursion for 4 guests with Donald Trump Jr. and/or Eric Trump and team," according to the invitation.

A few days before the invitation went out, a new nonprofit called Opening Day Foundation was registered in Texas. Paperwork filed with the state lists the two adult Trump sons and their Texas-based friends Gentry Beach and Tom Hicks Jr. as the nonprofit's directors. The documents were first reported by the Center for Public Integrity.

But Eric and Donald Trump Jr. had no idea they were named in the new nonprofit and have asked the Texas secretary of state to amend the filing to delete them, according to the Trump transition official. Mark Brinkerhoff, a spokesman for the event planners, also said Tuesday that the Trump sons should not have been listed as directors of the nonprofit.

On Tuesday, the inauguration venture put out a new invitation, which stripped out all references of access to the incoming president and his immediate family, although Eric and Donald Trump Jr. remain listed as honorary co-chairmen.

The $1 million donors can attend a private reception "with VIPs and celebrities associated with the event," the invitation now says. And in place of the Eric and Donald Trump Jr. hunting and fishing trip, there's more generic mention of a "multi-day excursion for four guests."

ACROSS THE NATION

FBI sought evidence of intrusions in Hillary Clinton emails

NEW YORK (AP)—The FBI was trying to get a look at thousands of Hillary Clinton's emails on disgraced former congressman Anthony Weiner's computer partly to see if anyone had hacked in to steal classified information, according to court documents unsealed Tuesday. Investigating possible hacking appeared to be a secondary rationale for the email search, which FBI Director James Comey launched in the waning days of the presidential election. When the FBI asked a magistrate judge in New York to issue a search warrant for Weiner's computer on Oct. 30, an agent spent pages describing concerns it might contain evidence Clinton had mishandled classified information. The warrant application, made public Tuesday, was filed two days after Comey informed Congress investigators had discovered email correspondence that could be pertinent to his recently closed probe of Clinton's use of a private email server while she was secretary of state.

Vandals attack pentagram erected to protest Nativity scene

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP)—A 300-pound metal sculpture of a satanic pentagram, erected as an atheist protest to a public park's Nativity scene, was severely damaged on Tuesday when it was pulled to the ground by vandals. Atheist Preston Smith's 10-foot tall sculpture lay broken in Sanborn Square at noon. Tire tracks led from the twisted metal to the street. It appeared vandals had attached a chain from a vehicle to the sculpture and yanked it down, dragging it several feet. As local television reporters prepared live broadcasts, two passers-by stopped and pushed the sculpture back onto its base before walking away. The sculpture sits about 20 feet from a traditional Nativity scene of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus, and is backed by a banner from an atheist group reading "Keep Saturn in Saturnalias," a reference to the belief that the early Christian church substituted Christmas for a Roman pagan holiday.

Obama bans future oil leases in much of Arctic, Atlantic

HONOLULU (AP)—President Barack Obama on Tuesday designated the bulk of U.S.-owned waters in the Arctic Ocean and certain areas in the Atlantic Ocean as indefinitely off limits to future oil and gas leasing.

The move helps put some finishing touches on Obama's environmental legacy while also testing President-elect Donald Trump's promise to unleash the nation's untapped energy reserves.

The White House announced the actions in conjunction with the government of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, which also placed a moratorium on new oil and gas leasing in its Arctic waters, subject to periodic review.

Obama is making use of an arcane provision in a 1953 law to ban offshore leases in the waters permanently. The statute says that "the president of the United States may, from time to time, withdraw from disposition any of the unleased lands of the outer Continental Shelf."

Environmental groups hope the ban, despite relying on executive powers, will be difficult for future presidents to reverse. The White House said it's confident the president's order will withstand legal challenge and said the language of the statute provides no authority for subsequent presidents to undo permanent withdrawals.

The Atlantic waters placed off limits to new oil and gas leasing are 31 canyons stretching off the coast of New England south to Virginia, though some had hoped for a more extensive ban that would have extended further south.

Existing leases aren't affected by the president's executive actions.

The administration cited environmental concerns in both regions to justify the moratorium. Obama also cited the importance of the Chukchi and Beaufort seas in providing subsistence for native Alaskans and the vulnerability of the ecosystem to an oil spill to justify his directive.

Obama also noted the level of fuel production occurring in the Arctic. Obama said just 0.1 percent of offshore crude production came from the Arctic in 2015, and at current oil prices, significant production would not occur in future decades.

Emergency managers charged over Flint's lead-tainted water

FLINT, Mich. (AP)—A criminal investigation of Flint's lead-contaminated water turned to former key officials at City Hall on Tuesday as Michigan's attorney general announced charges against four people accused of keeping residents on a contaminated system that caused the crisis.

Darnell Earley and Gerald Ambrose separately were state-appointed emergency managers in Flint in 2014-15 when the city was using the Flint River as a source of drinking water. Ambrose also served earlier as a financial adviser to the troubled town.

They were charged with four crimes, including conspiracy and misconduct in office. Howard Croft, Flint's former public works director, and Daugherty Johnson, the former utilities director, were charged with conspiracy and false pretenses.

Attorney General Bill Schuette said Earley and Ambrose committed Flint to $85 million in bonds to join a new regional water pipeline to Lake Huron while at the same time using a city water plant that was not equipped to properly treat the river water before it went to roughly 100,000 residents.

They claimed that debt-burdened Flint needed to sell bonds to clean up a lagoon, Schuette said, but the money went as the city's share to Karegnondi Water Authority to build the pipeline, which still is under construction.

"This case is a classic bait-and-switch. ... The lime sludge lagoon was not an emergency," said special prosecutor Todd Flood.

During a news conference, there was no allegation by Schuette that Earley and Ambrose personally gained from the bond deal or by keeping the Flint River as the source of water for Flint while the pipeline was being constructed.

Flint's water system became contaminated with lead because water from the river wasn't treated for corrosion for 18 months, from April 2014 to October 2015. The water ate away at a protective coating inside old pipes and fixtures, releasing lead.

Asia

UN rights chief: Investigate Philippine leader for killings

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The U.N. human rights chief asked Philippine authorities Tuesday to investigate President Rodrigo Duterte for murder after he claimed to have killed people in the past and also to examine the "appalling epidemic of extra-judicial killings" committed during his anti-drug crackdown.

Philippine judicial authorities "must demonstrate their commitment to upholding the rule of law and their independence from the executive by launching a murder investigation," U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said, adding it's "unthinkable for any functioning judicial system not to launch investigative and judicial proceedings when someone has openly admitted being a killer."

AP

An unidentified relative cries as people look at the body of a woman, later identified by her husband as that of Nora Acielo, after she was shot by still unidentified men while about to bring her two children to school at a poor neighborhood in Manila, Philippines Thursday, Dec. 8, 2016.

Since taking office in June, Duterte has obsessively overseen the crackdown on illegal drugs that has left more than 6,000 people dead. Philippine government officials have defended police actions during the crackdown, and the president has met past such calls with angry tirades.

Zeid's call, made in a statement issued in Geneva, was sparked by Duterte's remarks in recent speeches that as a town mayor in southern Davao city in 1988, he killed three suspected kidnappers in a firefight where he was backed up by three police officers. He later clarified he was unsure whether the bullets from his M16 rifle killed the suspects.

The brash-talking president has also suggested that he used to roam around his sprawling city as mayor on a big motorcycle to look for criminals to kill so policemen would emulate him.

"In Davao, I used to do it personally. Just to show to the guys that, if I can do it, why can't you?" Duterte said last week. "I go around in Davao with a motorcycle, with a big bike around and I would just patrol the streets and looking for trouble also. I was really looking for an encounter to be able to kill."

Duterte's acts "directly contravene the rights" enshrined in the Philippine constitution and the killings recalled by the president "also violate international law," Zeid said. The U.N. official also said Duterte's encouragement of others may constitute incitement to violence and expressed concern about Duterte's assurances that police officers who commit human rights violations would be immune from prosecution.

"The perpetrators must be brought to justice, sending a strong message that violence, killings and human rights violations will not be tolerated by the state and that no one is above the law," he said.

Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre II, however, has defended Duterte, saying the president often exaggerates killings of criminals to send a chilling warning to lawbreakers.

Aguirre said Duterte may have been resorting to hyperbole in his description of roaming around Davao on his motorcycle.

Duterte previously threatened to withdraw the Philippines from the United Nations for its criticism of his drug crackdown, describing the world body as inutile in the face of genocidal killings in other places.

After 2 years, experts say MH370 likely north of search area

SYDNEY (AP)—For two years, a handful of ships have diligently combed a remote patch of the Indian Ocean west of Australia in a $160 million bid to find Malaysia Airlines Flight 370. On Tuesday, investigators made what was surely a painful admission: They have probably been looking in the wrong place.

The latest analysis by a team of international investigators concluded the vanished Boeing 777 is highly unlikely to be in the current search zone and may instead be in a region farther north. But though crews are expected to finish their deep-sea sonar hunt of the current search area next month, the possibility of extending the search to the north appeared doubtful, with Australia's transport minister suggesting the analysis wasn't specific enough to justify continuing the hunt.

The latest twist in the search for Flight 370 highlights the extraordinary difficulty officials have faced in their attempts to find the aircraft based on the faintest scraps of data. All along, officials have said they are not simply looking for a needle in a haystack—they are looking for the haystack.

On Tuesday, the haystack was poised to shift again, with the release of a report by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, which is leading the search for the plane. The report is the result of a November meeting of international and Australian experts who reexamined all the data used to define the search area for the aircraft, which vanished during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014, with 239 people on board.

Since the plane disappeared, experts have analyzed a series of exchanges between the aircraft and a satellite to estimate a probable crash site along a vast arc of ocean in the southern hemisphere. A deep-sea search of a 120,000-square kilometer (46,000-square mile) stretch of water along the arc has so far come up empty.

In November, the experts went back over the satellite data, along with the results of a new ocean drift analysis of the more than 20 items of debris likely to have come from the plane that have washed ashore on beaches throughout the Indian Ocean. The analysis, based on where the items washed up and when, suggested the debris originated farther north along the arc from the current search zone.

Given the number of aircraft parts found so far, the team concluded that a debris field had floated on the water surface after the plane crashed. So they eliminated areas of the ocean where air crews had searched the surface in the early stages of the hunt.

Swiss man tied to Malay 1MBD scandal freed from Thai prison

BANGKOK (AP)—A Swiss man convicted of blackmail linked to a Malaysian financial scandal was freed Tuesday after serving over a year in a Thai prison.

Xavier Justo was one of around 30,000 inmates released early under a pardon by Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradevarangkun to mark his ascension to the throne on Dec. 1. Justo's lawyer said his client will be deported to Switzerland.

Justo was convicted in August 2015 of blackmailing his former employer, a Saudi oil exploration company, by threatening to sell to the media documents related to the company's dealings with Malaysia's 1MDB state development fund unless the company paid him $2.47 million.

The 1MDB fund has been the focus of investigations in the U.S., Switzerland, Singapore, and other countries over allegations of a global embezzlement and money-laundering scheme.

The U.S. Justice Department says people close to Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak stole at least $3.5 billion from 1MDB, which was meant to promote economic development projects. The department acted in July to seize $1.3 billion it says was diverted from the fund to buy assets in the U.S. Najib has stymied government investigations into the fund, denies any wrongdoing and rejects calls for his resignation.

Thai police had said Justo confessed to handing over documents to Sarawak Report, a London-based news website opposing the Malaysian government. He was originally set to be jailed for six years, then his sentence was halved for pleading guilty and commuted further for good behavior. Stories in Sarawak Report and The Wall Street Journal first revealed the fund's problems.

Justo, who said he's "very happy" about the release, cannot board a plane back home immediately because he needs to buy a ticket and sort out paperwork, but Justo's lawyer said he'll probably return home before Christmas. He is meanwhile being held at Bangkok's immigration detention center.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Island nation of Sao Tome breaks ties with Taiwan

BEIJING (AP)—Taiwan says the African island nation of Sao Tome and Principe has broken their diplomatic ties. Just 21 countries and governments now have diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Most of the world and the United Nations do not formally recognize Taiwan as a condition of maintaining relations with Beijing, which considers Taiwan a part of its territory. China's foreign ministry on Wednesday said it welcomed Sao Tome's decision to "break the so-called 'diplomatic' ties with Taiwan." China did not say whether it would resume its own diplomacy with Sao Tome. Beijing suspended relations between the two sides in 1997, after Sao Tome established relations with Taipei.

Afghan officials destroy 98 tons of seized opium, liquor

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Afghan authorities say they have destroyed 98 tons of seized narcotics, mostly raw opium but also heroin and hashish, as well as liquor. The contraband was burned on Tuesday on the outskirts of the capital, Kabul. Baz Mohammad Ahmadi, deputy interior minister for the counter-narcotics police, says all the drugs and alcoholic beverages were confiscated this year. Ahmadi said there were 579 cases in which contraband material was confiscated. He says 702 people were arrested for trafficking, including 28 women. Opium poppy cultivation is rising across the country, according to a joint survey by the U.N. and the Afghan government. Billions of dollars have been spent to curb drug trafficking in the past decade, including programs encouraging farmers to switch to other cash crops such as wheat, fruit and saffron.

10 Chinese men charged with drug smuggling in Australia

SYDNEY (AP)—Ten Chinese nationals have been charged with drug smuggling in Australia after officials said they found a stash of cocaine worth more than 60 million Australian dollars ($44 million) on their ship. Last week, the Australian Defense Force intercepted the 50-meter (160-foot) former research vessel off the island state of Tasmania, and escorted the boat to the state capital, Hobart. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection said police found 186 kilograms (410 pounds) of cocaine on board. The 10 crew members were charged on Tuesday with attempting to import a commercial quantity of a border controlled drug. If convicted, they could face a maximum penalty of life in prison.

World

Massive fireworks market blast kills at least 29 in Mexico

TULTEPEC, Mexico (AP)—A powerful chain-reaction explosion ripped through Mexico's best-known fireworks market on the northern outskirts of the capital Tuesday, killing at least 29 people, injuring scores more and sending a huge plume of charcoal-gray smoke billowing into the sky.

Video of the blast showed a dramatic staccato of rockets exploding in flashes of light, leveling the open-air San Pablito Market in Tultepec in Mexico State as it bustled with shoppers stocking up on fireworks to celebrate Christmas and New Year's.

Vendors' stands were reduced to piles of rubble, ash, and charred metal. It was the third devastating explosion and fire to ravage the market since 2005.

Crescencia Francisco Garcia said she was in the middle of the grid of stalls along with a few hundred others when the thunderous explosions began. She froze, reflexively looked up at the sky and then took off running through the smoke once she realized everyone was doing so. As she ran she saw people with burns and cuts, and lots of blood.

AP

This image made from video recorded from a passing car shows an explosion ripping through the San Pablito fireworks' market in Tultepec, Mexico, Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2016.

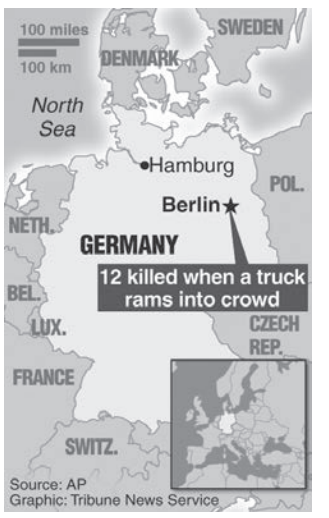
"Everything was catching fire. Everything was exploding," Francisco said. "The stones were flying, pieces of brick, everything was flying."

In comments broadcast on local TV news, Mexico State Gov. Eruviel Avila reported Tuesday night that in addition to the 26 people who perished at the market, three more victims died after being taken to hospitals. State Health Secretary Cesar Nomar Gomez Monge said 72 people were being treated for injuries including severe burns, in some cases over 90 percent of their bodies. Those hospitalized included 10 children.

Authorities have not yet said what may have caused the explosion but announced that an investigation had been opened.

"We are going to identify who is responsible," Avila said.

Sirens wailed and a heavy scent of gunpowder lingered in the air well after the explosion at the market, where most of the stalls were destroyed. The smoking, burned out shells of vehicles ringed the perimeter, and first responders and local residents wearing blue masks over their mouths combed through the ash and debris. Firefighters hosed down still-smoldering hotspots.



Tultepec Mayor Armando Portuguez Fuentes said the market was especially well stocked because demand for noisy firecrackers and rockets soars this time of year.

"We are obviously in the high season," Portuguez said. "There was more product than usual because we are a few days away from Christmas, a few days away from New Year's, and those are the days when the products made here are consumed the most."

Cesar Ornelas of Atizapan de Zaragoza was only 10 minutes into shopping with his son and his father when he heard the first explosions. He tried to run, but something knocked him to the ground from behind. He tried several times to get up, unsuccessfully, and ultimately his 15-year-old son Francisco had to drag him out.

"We didn't look back," said Ornelas, who suffered light burns and a large bruise over his left kidney. His white tank top had a fist-size burn on the chest. "We heard how the explosion was kind of going off bit by bit."

Nearly four hours later, he and Francisco limped gingerly out of the market area. Francisco said paramedics told him his leg was likely fractured by flying debris. Ornelas said his 67-year-old father, Ernesto, had run in a different direction and sought refuge in a nearby home. All the father's clothing was burned, and his face and arm were bloodied. An ambulance had spirited him to a hospital, but Ornelas wasn't sure where it was or how serious his injuries were.

Pope grants freedom to jailed monsignor in leaks scandal

VATICAN CITY (AP)—Pope Francis on Tuesday freed a Vatican monsignor convicted of leaking confidential documents to journalists, granting him a Christmas-time clemency and ending an embarrassing episode for the Holy See.

Francis granted "conditional freedom" to Spanish Monsignor Lucio Vallejo Balda after he served half of his 18-month sentence, the Vatican said late Tuesday. Fired from his job as a high-ranking Vatican financial official, Vallejo now falls under the authority of his local bishop in Astorga, Spain.

In July, a Vatican court convicted Vallejo of conspiring to pass documents onto two journalists, although it cleared him and a co-defendant of forming a criminal organization to do so.

The case had been criticized by media rights groups because the two journalists were also put on trial, though the court ultimately declared it had no jurisdiction to prosecute them.

The two journalists, Emiliano Fittipaldi and Gianluigi Nuzzi, wrote blockbuster books last year based on Vatican documents exposing the greed of bishops and cardinals angling for big apartments, the extraordinarily high costs of getting a saint made and the loss to the Holy See of millions of euros in rental income because of undervalued real estate.

The documentation had been compiled by a pontifical commission that Francis had asked to gather information about the Vatican's finances to make them more transparent and efficient.

Vallejo, the No. 2 of the commission, admitted in court that he gave Nuzzi 85 passwords to password-protected documents. He denied that the journalists threatened him, and put the blame of feeling pressured on Francesca Chaouqui, the communications expert who was also a member of the commission and was convicted alongside him of conspiracy.

She was got a 10-month suspended sentence.

Publishing confidential information is a crime in the Vatican, punishable by up to eight years in prison.

The trial had several surreal moments, including when Vallejo was put back under house arrest after a friend sneaked a cellphone to him inside a cake.

Francis' Christmas-time clemency harks back to the 2012 gesture granted by Pope Benedict XVI to his then-butler, who had been convicted of giving Nuzzi confidential documents for an earlier book about Vatican misdeeds.

Islamic State group claims Berlin Christmas market attack

BERLIN (AP)—The Islamic State group claimed responsibility Tuesday for a truck attack on a crowded Berlin Christmas market that German authorities said came right out of the extremist group's playbook, inflicting mass casualties on a soft target fraught with symbolic meaning.

The Monday night attack on the popular market by the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church in the heart of former West Berlin left 12 dead and 48 injured—the first mass casualty attack by Islamic extremists carried out on German soil. German security forces were still hunting for the perpetrator after releasing a man from custody for lack of evidence. The claim of responsibility carried on the Islamic State group's Amaq news agency described the man seen fleeing from the truck as "a soldier of the Islamic State" who "carried out the attack in response to calls for targeting citizens of the Crusader coalition."

Germany is not involved in anti-IS combat operations, but has Tornado jets and a refueling plane stationed in Turkey in support of the coalition fighting militants in Syria, as well as a frigate protecting a French aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean, among other assets.

The claim of responsibility came not long after German prosecutors said they had released a man picked up near the scene of the attack, initially suspected of driving the truck.

The man, a Pakistani citizen who came to Germany last year, was taken into custody based on a description from witnesses of a suspect who jumped out of the truck and fled after the attack.

Even before his release, officials had expressed doubt the man was behind the attack.

"We may still have a dangerous criminal out there," warned Berlin police chief Klaus Kandt, whose office urged people to be "particularly vigilant" and report "suspicious movement" using a special hotline.

Though Germany had not seen any successful mass-casualty Islamic extremist attacks until Monday, attempts and recent attacks in neighboring France and Belgium had made many feel it was inevitable.

"We've all been prepared that something like this could happen, so we were not surprised," said economics student Maximilian Much.

The 24-year-old Berliner said the attack hit home because he'd often visited the Christmas market with his girlfriend, but that he wouldn't let himself be led by emotion.

Turkey and Russia probe slaying of envoy in Ankara gallery

ANKARA, Turkey (AP)—Investigators from Turkey and Russia hunted for clues Tuesday in the assassination of Russia's ambassador to Turkey in front of stunned onlookers at a photo exhibition in Ankara.

A team of 18 Russian investigators and foreign ministry officials arrived in Turkey and began inspecting the art gallery where the shooting of Andrei Karlov took place.

Central to the joint Turkish-Russian investigation is whether Mevlut Mert Altintas, a member of Ankara's riot police squad, planned the attack alone.

One senior Turkish government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release details to the press, said it was unlikely Altintas acted alone.

The official said the killing had all the marks of being "fully professional, not a one-man action."

So far, authorities have detained only people close to the gunman in their investigation: Altintas' parents, sister, three other relatives and his roommate in Ankara.

Independent Turkish security analyst Abdullah Agar said it was "likely that an organization was behind" the assassination.

The analyst said that Altintas' behavior and the manner in which he carried out the attack "gives the impression that he received training that was much more than riot police training."

Agar also said the gunman's words, which he uttered in Arabic, were from a passage frequently cited by Jihadists.

Altintas shouted "Don't forget Aleppo! Don't forget Syria!" in Turkish during the attack, and also yelled "Allahu akbar," the Arabic phrase for "God is great." He continued in Arabic: "We are the descendants of those who supported the Prophet Muhammad, for jihad."

A Turkish Foreign Ministry official said the country's foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, provided U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry information on the assailant during a telephone conversation on Tuesday.

Cavusoglu also told Kerry that both Turkey and Russia "know" that a movement led by U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen was behind the attack, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with government rules.

Environment

Fight over exotic fern threatens future of South Florida wildlife refuge

By JENNY STALETOVICH
MIAMI HERALD

MIAMI—Old World climbing fern, the monster vine packing 100-foot long tendrils that has infested huge swaths of the Everglades, with a particularly ferocious choke hold on the tree islands of the Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge on its northern tip, may have finally succeeded in killing the refuge.

Just not in the way anyone expected.

In August, the South Florida Water Management District, which owns the 144,000 acres occupied by the 65-year-old refuge, threatened to abolish a lease agreement with its caretaker, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As landlord, the district said it could no longer abide by its tenant's lousy housekeeping and failure to control the fern.

"I don't know what else you do. Three years ago the (governing board) out of frustration invited the Department of Interior to the refuge so they could see the damage," said district executive director Pete Antonacci. "The Department of Interior came down and saw the damage and did nothing."

But the refuge, and a collection of environmental groups that have fiercely bird-dogged restoration of the Everglades, say they were surprised by the district's abrupt threat after years of collaboration. Since a 2000 lease was negotiated and spelled out a joint effort, the federal wildlife service has spent nearly $30 million to control invasive plants including the fern, now found from Jacksonville south to Cape Sable.

Nancy Marshall said her husband, John, who died last year, knocked heads with the district frequently over the refuge named for his uncle, the naturalist whose "Marshall Plan" laid out Everglades restoration. But they usually managed to strike a deal, she said.

"He passed away satisfied that he had done the work he needed to do," she said. "Would he be frustrated now? I think so. I know so. Would he be over there pounding away? Yes."

They say the partnership is being torn apart by a new level of animosity and believe the decision is as much about politics, and an effort to rid the state of 30 years of federal meddling, as controlling the fern.

"A small group of men who are out of step with everyone in this room have made a decision to cancel the lease," Nathaniel Reed, the assistant Secretary of the Interior under Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, who had a hand in nearly every law to restore the Everglades, told a meeting of refuge supporters this month. "They are totally out of step with all of us."

In laying out their intentions, the water district's governing board has vowed to protect "plants, wildlife and public use and enjoyment and support scientific research," and point to the $1.8 billion spent by the state to clean up water and millions more spent on fighting exotic species. But the service says without the refuge, the land will not be managed with wildlife as its focus. The refuge is a first stop for migrating birds and has the highest concentration of alligators in the Everglades.

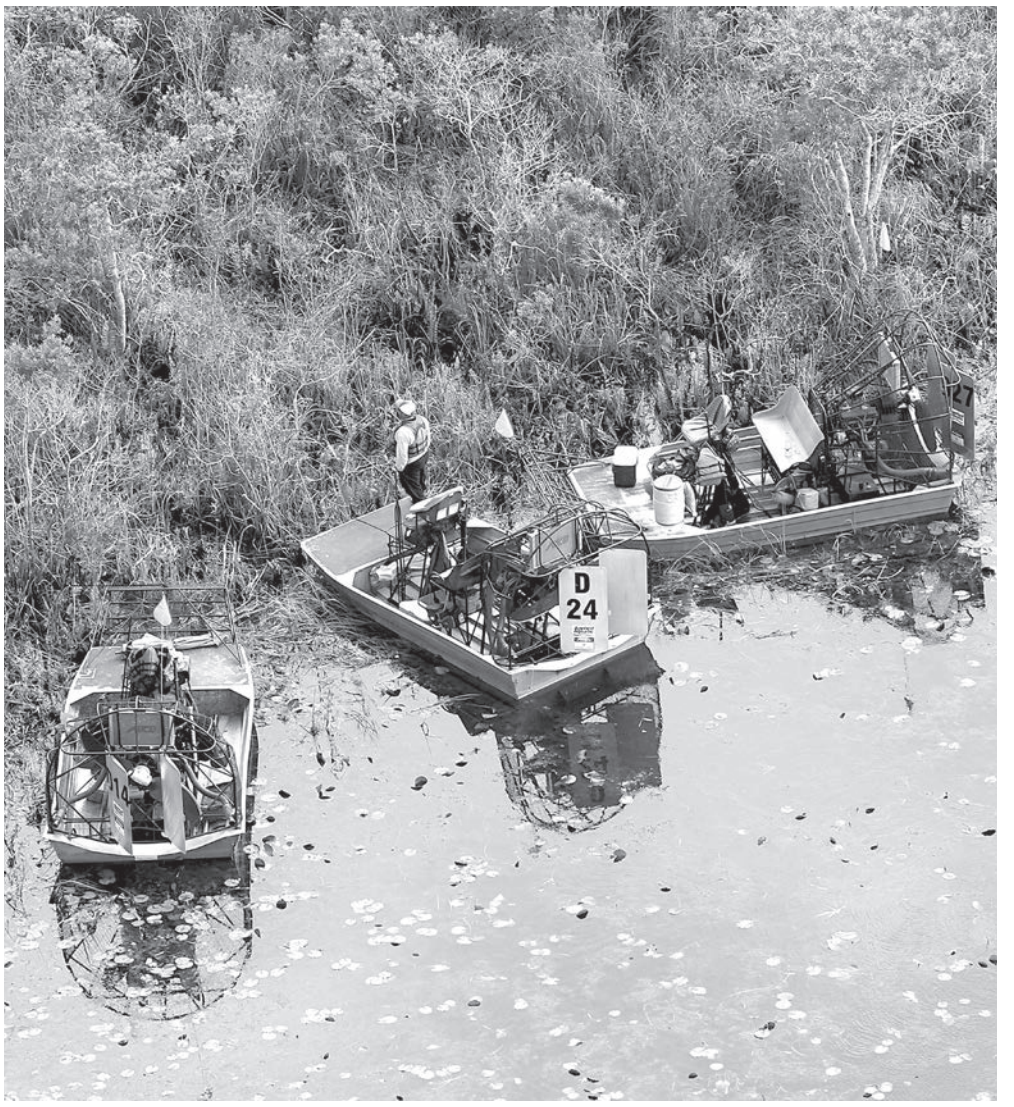
"The South Florida Water Management District's mission does not include wildlife conservation or preservation," said National Wildlife Refuge Association board member Dragana Connaughton. "Their mission is to manage water."

The logic is not hard to follow, refuge supporters say. Despite gaining major ground in clean-up efforts, parts of the Everglades still fail to meet a court-ordered limit on phosphorus from fertilizer of 10 parts per billion in water flowing into the refuge and Everglades National Park. If the land is no longer a refuge, the district could make the case in court that the limit no longer applies, said Martha Musgrove, a regional director for the Florida Wildlife Federation, which helped collect 67,000 signatures on petitions sent to Gov. Rick Scott Friday to honor the lease.

And if the restriction no longer applies, the state could also move to lift the same limit set in state standards without fear of violating the decree, Musgrove said.

"They want to set their own water quality standards and not have a federal court looking over their shoulder," she said.

Supporters of the refuge are also concerned about how the district manages water coming into wetlands. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers now sets a schedule for the refuge that includes a range of water levels to protect the unique tree islands that make up the largest stands remaining in the Everglades. Refuge manager Rolf Olson said water is generally kept as close to optimal levels as possible to preserve more than 45,000 tree islands, which provide shelter for a unique collection of plants and animals in the Everglades.



TNS
Workers use air boats to travel into the marshes, then wade to infected areas in water that can sometimes be waste deep.

In two other water conservation areas to the south managed by the district, the number of tree islands has fallen over the years, he said. Of the 40 islands in the middle area, 36 are considered dead ghost islands. In the largest conservation area that straddles Broward and Miami-Dade counties, only 557 remained in 1995, down from 1,251 in 1904.

Olson also worries the district will allow recreational airboats into the area, which could worsen the fern infestation by blowing around the plant's microscopic spores.

What the two sides do agree on is the need to control Lygodium micryphyllum, an ornamental plant that first escaped a Martin County nursery in the 1950s. Since 1995, it has increased 604 percent across the entire 5,400-square mile ecosystem, according to a joint federal and state study. Scientists say it may yet be the toughest invasive pest to fight.

"It populates an area regardless of habitat," said Rory Feeney, the district's bureau chief for land resources. "It can be a tree island out in the sawgrass. It can be in the mangroves. And it grows incredibly fast."

Tony Pernas, the supervisory botanist with the Big Cypress National Preserve, has been tracking the spread for years and, with the district, has conducted aerial mapping surveys as far south as Cape Sable. The last time he mapped the fern in 2013, he counted 25,000 vine-choked acres. The state's tracking map shows sightings across two-thirds of the state.

What makes controlling the vine nearly impossible is where it goes — in remote marshes — and how it grows, blanketing anything it can find in thick mats. It can also shimmy up trees to form a dense, choking canopy and fuel intense fires that trees might otherwise survive.

Aerial spraying would be the weapon of choice, but can only be used if the fern is dense enough to prevent herbicides from reaching plants underneath, including native ferns, which would die, Pernas said. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's invasive plant laboratory in Fort Lauderdale is also looking at bugs to attack the plant, but none have so far managed to succeed.

That leaves herbicides and hard labor. Workers are airboated into marshes, where they wade through sometimes thigh-high water, whacking at vines with machetes and spraying herbicides on roots. On tree islands where the vine grows well over their heads, Pernas said workers "poodle cut" the vine by hacking out chunks in the middle and treating the roots.

"What's important is not only how do we remove it, but remove it with minimum impact on the native systems," said University of Florida biologist Frank Mazzotti. "It's incredibly labor intensive. When you get out in the wildlife refuge, that really speaks to the breadth and depth of the problem and how hard it is to deal with everything."

In 2014, the agencies agreed controlling the fern will cost about $25 million over five years with another $15 million needed to keep it under control for at least five more years. While the license agreement set 13 performance measurements including controlling the fern by 2017, it intentionally did not set a dollar amount because the refuge can never be certain how much Congress will give it, Olson said, although the testy negotiation did help trigger an infusion of federal money to treat invasive plants, which jumped from just $41,000 in 2000 to $1.3 million in 2001.

Still, Rolson said, district officials make it seem like Fish and Wildlife officials have done nothing when in fact they meet regularly and even hammered out a 2015 memo of understanding vowing to spend between $1.5 million and nearly $2 million through 2018. Between federal money and money from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, which receives federal tax dollars to manage refuges, spending for the last two years has equaled or topped $5 million.

But the district says year-to-year budgeting is not the same as committing to the five-year, $25 million plan and was miffed when the Department of Interior failed this year to ask Congress for the money.

"I agree we shouldn't be saber-rattling, but if you own property you should care for it," Antonacci said. "The (water management district) owns the property and we need to care for it. We need to care for it either by urging the people now responsible for it to do it, or seek some other solution."

Eliminating the refuge could also put the district in a legal fix. In 2000, when the state and the feds were renegotiating their lease, the Department of Interior issued a legal opinion finding that the refuge was intended to partly mitigate the environmental damage caused by the massive Central and South Florida drainage project that created the three reservoirs. So long as the refuge also serves as a water conservation area for flood control, the district "has an obligation to fulfill its part of the bargain," the opinion said.

"It stands to reason that when Congress appropriates hundreds of millions of dollars in order to carry out beneficial flood control purposes," it said, "it would not be satisfied with only partial mitigation."

Altering the use might require the Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct a lengthy assessment of potential environmental damage, an ironic twist.

"There's no white hats in this story," said Olson, the refuge manager. "We are behind on Lygodium. It is an ecological issue. It is a threat, almost a potential disaster. But we are doing good on other things, and it seems extreme to throw us away because we can't achieve this one impossible thing that everyone is having problems with."

To Her New Home In Paradise

Antonia Pangelinan Mafnas Apatang

Lovingly known as
"Tonie" or "Tonka"

Born to life on November 7, 1950, she walked the path to her new home to begin her new life in God's Paradise on December 12, 2016. At Heaven's gate she will be welcomed and reunited with her father ***Juan Rios Mafnas;*** her stepfather ***Jose A. Concepcion;*** her brothers and sister, ***Jesus P., Jose P., and Maria P. Mafnas;*** her parents-in-law ***Gregorio P. and Rosa M. Castro,*** together with other family members who are at peaceful rest in Paradise.

A life fulfilled, ***Tonie*** lived a joyful, happy life, always with the beauty of a smile on her face and was a person so kind, caring, supportive, understanding and very loving. Her dedication, commitment, and especially her love as a wife to her husband ***David Mundo Apatang***, and as a mother to her children and grandchildren, ***Elaine Apatang-Butts/Frederick (Chloe); Velma Paulette Lore (John Anthony, Justin); Victoria Ann Apatang/Sidney Camacho (John David, Donovan, Jacoby, Alaina Elizabeth); Deyna Rose Apatang Sunderland/Tim (Tim, Allissa, Andrew Bailey, Lana Antonia); David John Apatang (Lucio Keikoa, Charles Pablo, David John Jr.); David Peter Apatang; Kimberly A. Acebo/Ruben (Jacqueline A. Rogers and family; Kevin, Kelly Acebo)*** will forever be instilled in their hearts as she had taught them well.

Loving memories of ***Tonie,*** will live on in the hearts of her mother, ***Victoria Pangelinan Mafnas Concepcion;*** her siblings, in-laws and their families, ***Theresita P. Mafnas and children; Antonio P./Cynthia C. Mafnas and children; Susana T. Mafnas (†Jesus) and children; Marian DLG. Tudela (†Jose) and children; Liberty L. Mafnas (†Jose) and children; Primitiva A. Babauta and children; Edith A./Antonio Ayuyu and children; Joseph M./Julie Castro and children; Rodrigo M./Pang Castro and children; Tomasa C./Joe Tenorio and children.***

Tonie's intelligent conversations, her laughter, her generosity and friendship will not only be in the hearts of her family and loved ones, but will be instilled in the hearts of her numerous aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, classmates, former co-workers, and numerous friends.

Tonie will be returning home on Friday, December 23rd, 2016. In her memory, masses of intention are offered daily at 6:00 p.m. at San Antonio Church. ***Tonie*** will be with us for the last time on ***Thursday, December 29, 2016 and her funeral cortege will proceed from Borja Funeral Home at 8:00 a.m. to Mount Carmel Cathedral. Responso and rosary follows immediately. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11:00 a.m. followed immediately with burial at the Veterans Cemetery in Marpi.***

Your prayers, thoughts, and presence are sincerely appreciated.

Mayor David M. Apatang, children and grandchildren
Victoria Pangelinan Mafnas Concepcion
Pangelinan, Mafnas & Apatang Families

Life & Style

Tupac Shakur, Pearl Jam, Yes to be inducted into Rock Hall

NEW YORK (AP)—The late rapper Tupac Shakur and Seattle-based rockers Pearl Jam lead a class of Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees including folkie Joan Baez and 1970s favorites Journey, Yes and Electric Light Orchestra.

The rock hall, in downtown Cleveland, also said Tuesday it would give a special award to Nile Rodgers, whose disco-era band Chic failed again to make the cut after its 11th time nominated.

Baez will be inducted only months after her 1960s paramour, Bob Dylan, was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

The hall's 32nd annual induction ceremony will take place on April 7 at the Barclays Center. HBO will show highlights later, with SiriusXM doing a radio broadcast.

Shakur was shot and killed after attending a boxing match in Las Vegas in 1996. His death has spawned conspiracy theories but remains unsolved. "Changes," ''Keep Ya Head Up," ''Ambitionz Az a Ridah" and "Life Goes On" are among his best-known songs. He was 25 when he died and left behind a trove of music that was released posthumously.

In this Sept. 2, 2012, file photo, Pearl Jam performs at the "Made In America" music festival in Philadelphia. AP

Pearl Jam exploded in popularity from the start in the early 1990s behind songs including "Alive," ''Jeremy" and "Even Flow." After Nirvana, it is the second band with roots in Seattle's grunge rock scene to make the hall. Behind singer Eddie Vedder and other original members Mike McCready, Stone Gossard and Jeff Ament, Pearl Jam remains active and is a popular live act.

Vedder is no newcomer to rock hall ceremonies, having given induction speeches for Neil Young and the Ramones.

Baez was a political activist and mainstay of the folk movement, performing at the first Newport Folk Festival at age 19 in 1959. She was known primarily as an interpreter of others' songs, introducing Dylan to a wider audience at the beginning of his career. Their affair ended badly in 1965, for which Dylan later apologized.

Baez's own "Diamonds and Rust" in 1975 was one of her biggest hits.

"I never considered myself to be a rock and roll artist," Baez said Tuesday. "But as part of the folk music boom which contributed to and influenced the rock revolution of the '60s, I am proud that some of the songs I sang made their way into the rock lexicon. I very much appreciate this honor and acknowledgement by the Hall of Fame."

Journey's 1981 song "Don't Stop Believin'" was given new life by being featured in the closing scene of HBO's "The Sopranos" and became a favorite of a new generation. Its 6.8 million iTunes sales makes it the most-bought song on that platform from the pre-digital era, according to Nielsen SoundScan.

Former singer Steve Perry, estranged from the band for many years, offers some potential rock hall drama: Will he show up for his induction?

Guitarist and co-founder Neal Schon told Billboard he's reached out to Perry.

"I would hope that Steve would at least do something with us," Schon said. "He went and sang a couple songs with the Eels last year to let people know he can still sing, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed but I'm not counting on anything."

There was no immediate response Tuesday to a call to Perry's lawyer.

Britain's Yes, known for its complex compositions, was a leader of the 1970s progressive rock movement. Yes' hits include "I've Seen All Good People," ''Roundabout" and "Owner of a Lonely Heart," and its fans have waged a vociferous campaign to see them honored. Founding bass player Chris Squire, the one constant in many years of personnel changes, died in June 2015.

Alan White, the band's drummer for 44 years, said from his home in Seattle that it was wonderful to get the recognition and thanked fans for their advocacy.

"It means a lot," he said.

Celebs reveal the childhood gifts that got away

NEW YORK (AP)—Sometimes, Santa leaves scars, by way of kid-coveted gifts that never landed under the tree.

And sometimes, the big guy in the red suit just gets it wrong. Ask Will Smith.

"My sister got the Easy-Bake Oven instead of me," he said promoting his movie "Collateral Beauty."

"I don't know why they don't give boys Easy-Bake Ovens, you know? Boys should be able to cook stuff, so that was actually a tragedy from my youth, that my sister got the Easy-Bake Oven and I didn't," Smith joked.

For Jennifer Aniston, who co-stars in "Office Christmas Party," the elusive holiday gift of Christmas Past amounted to Barbie denied. Or at least part of Barbie.

"The Barbie head," to be exact, to which co-star Jason Bateman wondered on a red carpet: "Just the head?"

Aniston: "Yeah, the bust. Remember? The hair could grow. You could pull out the hair and then you could cut it. Paint makeup on it."

The still-not-sure Bateman: "So a life-sized bust?"

"Yeah," she replied.

Actress Lily Collins was in the Barbie struggle: "I wanted a Barbie Jeep. I never got my Barbie Jeep."

It was personal for country-pop star Kelsea Ballerini.

"I swear every year me and my mom went to go see 'The Nutcracker,' she recalled.

"I've never told this story before. Every year I wanted one of the big tutus, like the big straight-out sequined tutus, and so one year I wrote a letter to Santa very seriously and very well-spoken, and I said: 'Santa, I'm gonna reason with you,'" she explained.

"I need a tutu because I've gone to 'The Nutcracker' like seven years in a row, my last name is Ballerini, I'm basically a ballerina and I need a tutu.' And I didn't get one."

That's not the saddest story ever told for the pet-obsessed, including the younger self of Naomie Harris, who co-stars in "Moonlight."

"I really wanted a dog and I never got a dog and my mom got me a rabbit instead, but a rabbit is not a dog and that was really disappointing," she said.

For funnyman Keegan-Michael Key, it was more like the big fish that got away.

"Oh, God. I wanted a Great Dane so bad but we lived in a small house," he recalled. "They would have had to feed that thing more than me and my brother."

Composer and music producer Hans Zimmer found a silver lining.

"From a really early age, being a geeky kid who wanted to make music with technology, I wanted a synthesizer of course. And there's no way any parent would go and give that to their child because these are expensive things," he said.

"And so when I finally was able to earn the money to give it to myself, that was still in those moments where everybody was saying to me, 'When are you going to get a real job?' I think the greatest thing about not getting the gift was to be able to earn the gift myself and doing something with it," Zimmer said.

James Taylor cancels Manila concert over Duterte's drug war

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—James Taylor has canceled his February concert in Manila, saying reports of summary executions of suspected drug offenders in the Philippines without judicial proceedings are "deeply concerning and unacceptable."

The American singer-songwriter tweeted Wednesday that he had been looking forward to performing in Manila and that it saddened him to cancel the concert. He apologized to his Filipino fans and said all tickets sold for the Feb. 25 performance at Manila's Mall of Asia Arena would be fully refunded.

Taylor said his scheduled concerts in Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand would not be affected.

Since taking office in June, President Rodrigo Duterte has overseen a crackdown on illegal drugs that has left more than 6,000 people dead, alarming Western governments and human rights watchdogs. Philippine government officials have defended police actions during the crackdown.

While acknowledging that drug addiction is a worldwide problem that seriously harms society, Taylor criticized the anti-drug campaign.

"For a sovereign nation to prosecute and punish, under the law, those responsible for illegal trade in drugs is, of course, understandable, even commendable," Taylor tweeted. "But recent reports from the Philippines of summary executions of suspected offenders without trial or judicial process are deeply concerning and unacceptable to anyone who loves the rule of law."

Dozens of tweets from people reacting to Taylor's message praised the musician and voiced respect for his stand. Others urged other artists to follow his lead, while a handful of Duterte supporters said Taylor should see the situation for himself instead of basing his opinion only on media reports.

Owners of 1967 hit song 'Happy Together' lose copyright case

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP)—Radio stations don't have to get permission—or pay compensation—to the owners of old music recordings in order to play the recordings, the state's highest court ruled Tuesday in an ongoing legal dispute between Sirius XM Radio and the owners of The Turtle's 1967 hit "Happy Together."

The Court of Appeals determined that New York common law does not recognize a "public performance right" that would enable the owners of old records to require radio stations to seek permission or render payment before playing the music. At issue in the case are recordings made before 1972, when new federal copyright laws went into effect.

Flo & Eddie Inc., a company owned by two of The Turtles' founding members, sued Sirius in federal court for copyright infringement, arguing that its rights were violated when Sirius plays The Turtles' pre-1972 songs without permission or compensation. Because the suit involved questions about state law, it spawned legal contests in New York, as well as in Florida and California.

According to the New York decision, written by Judge Leslie Stein, there is no state law establishing such a right. Stein also noted that record companies and artists have long "had a symbiotic relationship with radio stations, and wanted them to play their records to encourage name recognition and corresponding album sales."

Daniel Petrocelli, the attorney for Sirius, said the lawsuit "was simply an effort by record companies to extract more money, beyond what they receive when people buy or download their music."

Tuesday's decision resolves one piece of the much larger legal dispute over the rights of record owners. An attorney for Flo & Eddie Inc. said he is hopeful the suit will ultimately prevail.

"The good fight to protect artist's rights rages on," said attorney Henry Gradstein in a statement.

SiriusXM to give Baldwin, 2 Dope Queens podcasts radio home

NEW YORK (AP)—The satellite giant SiriusXM is giving a radio home to several popular podcasts, picking up 11 programs produced by New York's WNYC Studios, including Alec Baldwin's "Here's the Thing" and the irreverent "2 Dope Queens."

Starting Jan. 9, the programs will air on SiriusXM's Insight channel, a news-talk station that frequently has a comic bent.

Sirius currently airs a handful of podcasts among its 170 channels that reach 31 million subscribers, including one with Neil DeGrasse Tyson. The deal with WNYC announced Tuesday aligns the satellite network with the second-most popular producer of podcasts behind NPR, potentially giving those programs a much wider audience.

The two-time Peabody Award-winning "Radiolab," hosted by Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich, will make it on to SiriusXM. "Freakonomics Radio," which discusses the oddities of human behavior, and "2 Dope Queens" hosted by Phoebe Robinson and Jessica Williams, are among the nation's most popular podcasts. Actor Baldwin is frequently in the news, particularly with his "Saturday Night Live" portrayal of Donald Trump.

Baldwin

The deal also includes some programs that currently air on radio, including "The New Yorker Radio Hour" and "On the Media," which is hosted by Brooke Gladstone and Bob Garfield.

The podcasts will also be a testing ground for SiriusXM; some shows that prove popular may become regular radio programs of their own, said Scott Greenstein, the company's president and chief content officer.

By looking at podcasts, Greenstein said Sirius hopes to guide listeners through what can be a chaotic medium, he said.

"There are so many of them, they're like YouTube videos," Greenstein said. "There are only so many of them that you can consume. It's great if you can find a way to curate them."

The narrative program "Snap Judgment" and host Anna Sale's "Death, Sex & Money" will also get Sirius exposure.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Richard Marx says he's no 'big hero' after plane incident

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Richard Marx says he wasn't a hero for apparently intervening after an unruly passenger disrupted a Korean Air flight and had to be restrained. Marx and his wife, Daisy Fuentes, documented the incident on Facebook and Instagram on Tuesday. The "Right Here Waiting" singer and Fuentes, a former MTV VJ, were married last year. Fuentes wrote that her husband was the first to help subdue the man, and Marx criticized the flight crew for failing to properly restrain the man. A Korean Air spokesman confirmed the incident aboard the flight from Hanoi to Seoul and that photos on Marx's Facebook page were shot during the flight. Cho Hyun Mook said the matter was under investigation and that it appears that crew members responded in accordance with airline policies. Marx posted a later update saying he and Fuentes were home safe and saying he wasn't a "big 'hero'" but "just did what I would hope anyone would do in the same situation." Citing Incheon police, the Yonhap News Agency reported that the passenger was a 34-year-old South Korean man who became drunk after having two and a half glasses of hard liquor on the flight. Incheon police officials could not be reached for comment.

Amy Schumer buys back family farm as gift for her father

Amy Schumer has given her father an early holiday gift by buying back the farm her family once owned. Schumer posted a screengrab on Instagram on Monday of her delivering the news to her father on a video call. She also posted a video of herself as a child walking through a cornfield on the farm. She added in the caption, "We lost the farm when we lost everything else. But today I got to buy it back for him." Schumer didn't say where the farm is located. The comedian told The New York Times in 2013 that her family went bankrupt when she was 9. ***(AP)***

Dick Van Dyke to appear in upcoming sequel to 'Mary Poppins'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Dick Van Dyke will appear in Disney's upcoming sequel to "Mary Poppins." Van Dyke played chimney sweep Bert in the 1964 original as well as the elderly banker, Mr. Dawes. He tells Entertainment Tonight that in "Mary Poppins Returns," he'll play Mr. Dawes' son. The 91-year-old comedy legend says he'll be going to London in the spring to shoot his part, which he calls "a little song-and-dance number." He tells The Hollywood Reporter that the movie will be set 20 years after the original. Emily Blunt is set to play Mary Poppins. Meryl Streep, Colin Firth, Angela Lansbury and "Hamilton's" Lin-Manuel Miranda will also star.

Marquette University adds to Tolkien collection

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Marquette University is adding to its J.R.R. Tolkien Collection. The university says it has acquired a first edition, first printing of "The Hobbit." The book is one of 1,500 such copies published in 1937. "The Hobbit" is recognized as a classic in children's literature. The first printing sold out before the end of 1937 and includes artwork drawn by Tolkien himself. No purchase price was disclosed. Marquette's Tolkien collection includes the original manuscripts of "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. The university's library director in the 1950s recognized "The Lord of the Rings" as a masterpiece soon after it was published and reached an agreement with Tolkien to obtain the manuscripts for less than $5,000. The Hobbit manuscripts at Marquette contain nearly 1,600 pages.

Feds want 'Dance Moms' star to lose $120K in currency case

PITTSBURGH (AP)—"Dance Moms" reality TV star Abby Lee Miller should forfeit $120,000 worth of Australian currency she brought into the country without reporting it, federal prosecutors said Tuesday.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Pittsburgh wants Miller to forfeit the money when she's sentenced Jan. 20 on the currency charge and for concealing $775,000 worth of income from the Lifetime network reality show and spinoff projects during her Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Miller pleaded guilty in June.

She was charged last year with illegally trying to hide her reality TV income from a bankruptcy court, and authorities added the currency charge shortly before she pleaded guilty in both cases. Authorities contend she divided more than $120,000 worth of Australian money into plastic bags and had others in her group put the bags in their luggage in August 2014, violating a law requiring people to report more than $10,000 worth of foreign currency before bringing it into the country.

Body found believed to be that of ex-reality show contestant

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A body found Tuesday in a backyard is believed to be that of a former reality TV show contestant who vanished over the weekend after attending a birthday party at a California beer hall.

Police and coroner's officials searched at a home in unincorporated Lennox, near Los Angeles International Airport, after an acquaintance of Lisa Marie Naegle was arrested and indicated her body was there, police said.

"We can confirm a body which we believe is Lisa Marie was discovered in a shallow grave at the suspect's home," police spokesman Sal Ramirez said Tuesday night. "The detectives strongly believe it is her."

A motive for and cause of her death were not immediately disclosed.

Jackie Jerome Rogers, 34, was arrested Tuesday on suspicion of murder after being questioned about her disappearance. It wasn't immediately clear whether he had a lawyer.

Naegle, 36, a nurse who lived in the San Pedro area of Los Angeles, was a losing contestant on the show "Bridalplasty" in 2010. She competed for a dream wedding and plastic surgery.

Young teen acting out needs to find new role

DEAR ABBY: I am writing regarding my almost 13-year-old daughter. She's a sweet girl but lately has been involved in a lot of drama. Recently my husband and I saw what we believe to be two hickeys on her neck, one on each side. She has denied, denied, denied it, but we know what we know.

I'm worried because a few months ago she was called into her counselor's office for "roasting." She was asked to roast two specific girls, and the information got back to them and back to the counselor. Our daughter is not allowed to date, and although she has friends who started dating at 10 or 11, I don't allow her to go to their homes. I do allow them to come to our home instead.

I just need to know how to handle this situation before it gets out of control. I have tried talking calmly and patiently with her, but it doesn't work. She believes she knows it all and I know nothing.

UNSURE IN NEW JERSEY

DEAR UNSURE: Girls who mock others and say cruel things are less "nice" than you would like to believe. It's a form of bullying. You need to nip this in the bud. A way to handle your daughter's misbehavior would be to institute consequences for getting called to the counselor's office and/or lying to you and your husband. By consequences, I mean the removal of privileges—cellphone, television, internet, or having friends over for a period of time.

Also, if your daughter is coming home with hickeys, she may have too much unsupervised time on her hands. So if you haven't already, involve her in SUPERVISED activities such as church youth groups, sports and special-interest clubs if her school offers them. If she's going to a friend's house, be sure an adult will be there.

Parenting is a full-time job. In time your daughter will mature and this, too, will pass. But for now she needs watching.

DEAR ABBY: My best friend—who is 19—was concerned that she might be pregnant because her period was late. She told me that she and her husband (yes, she's married) have been having unprotected sex. Lo and behold, she took multiple tests and she is pregnant.

I know they are not ready to have a baby, even though she says she's excited. They are currently living in a hotel, and she doesn't have a job. Her husband's mom doesn't even know they're married. I feel bad, but it makes me not want to be her friend anymore because of the choices she's made and where she has ended up. Any advice?

DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO

DEAR DON'T KNOW: Yes. If you prefer not to be part of her drama—and it doesn't take a crystal ball to see that there is likely to be plenty—back off. And tell her honestly that you are not equipped to handle her problems right now.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR ABBY: I sent out save-the-date notices for my wedding in November. One couple has stopped talking to me and refuses to tell me why. Must I send them an invitation to my wedding?

WEDDING BLUES

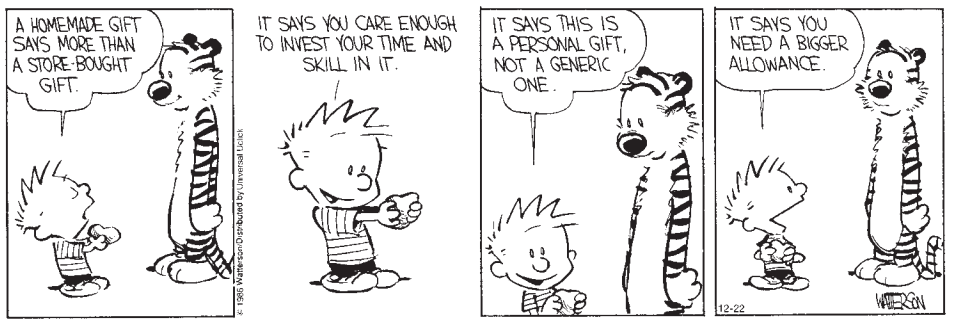
DEAR WEDDING BLUES: According to Emily Post, the rules of etiquette dictate that "EVERYONE WHO RECEIVES A SAVE-THE-DATE CARD MUST RECEIVE AN INVITATION." (The italics are Emily's.) However, because the couple has stopped speaking to you, do not be surprised if you hear nothing from them.

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


A HOMEMADE GIFT SAYS MORE THAN A STORE-BOUGHT GIFT.
IT SAYS YOU CARE ENOUGH TO INVEST YOUR TIME AND SKILL IN IT.
IT SAYS THIS IS A PERSONAL GIFT, NOT A GENERIC ONE.
IT SAYS YOU NEED A BIGGER ALLOWANCE.
12-22
WATTERSON

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

MOUSE PROBLEM SOLVED, GARFIELD!
THEY'RE GOING TO HAVE TO STAY SOMEWHERE ELSE THIS WINTER!
THIS CAN'T BE PERMANENT, GUYS
OH, COME ON!
WE LIKE IT HERE!
CENTRAL HEAT, BABY!
JIM DAVIS 12-22

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WELCOME TO MY HOLIDAY OFFICE PARTY, KATY!
THANKS!
THERE ARE COOKIES ON MY DESK, AND THERE'S PUNCH OVER BY MY PRINTER.
WHO'S THE HIPSTER BY THE FILE CABINET?
ANDRE FROM THE COFFEE SHOP. I HIRED HIM TO CHECK COATS.
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The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

I'M WATCHING A REMAKE OF "HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS."
HOW IS IT?
IN THIS VERSION, THE WHOS IN WHOVILLE FORM A VIGILANTE MOB AND BEAT THE ☠! # OUT OF THE GRINCH BEFORE TAKING BACK THEIR STUFF.
LEAVE IT TO HOLLYWOOD.
ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER PLAYS LITTLE CINDY LOU WHO'S DAD.
I'M OUTTA HERE.
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CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

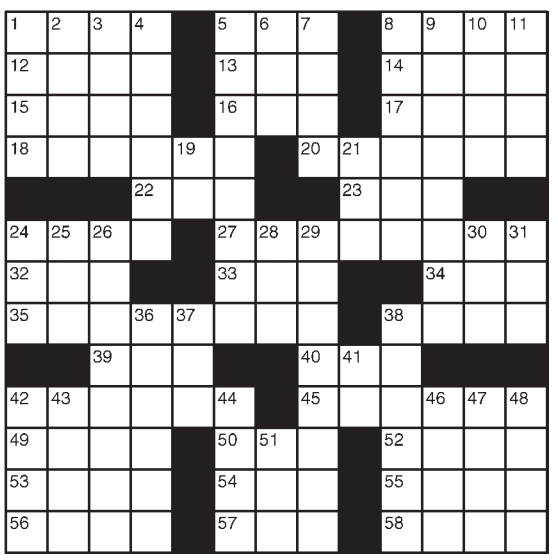
ACROSS
1 "Pygmalion" writer
5 "Say what?"
8 Boutique
12 Hawaiian city
13 Inseparable
14 Skin opening
15 Black-and-white cookie
16 Soviet space station
17 One-named supermodel
18 Computer whiz
20 Rolls with holes
22 Switch settings
23 — Alamos
24 London neighborhood
27 100 percent sure
32 Lamb's dam
33 Last (Abbr.)
34 Animation frame
35 Big snake
38 Guitars' kin
39 Society newbie
40 QB's stats
42 Showy flower
45 Out-of-the-park hits
49 Earth sci.
50 E.T.'s craft
52 Met melody
53 Office note
54 Zodiac animal
55 Hostels
56 Rhyming tributes
57 Chopper
58 Stamina, so to speak

DOWN
1 Attempt
2 Employ
3 Actor Guinness
4 "Yay!"
5 Folksy
6 Half of bi-
7 Basil or thyme
8 Tap
9 Nostalgic, in a way
10 Verbal
11 Corrals
19 Fashionable
21 Frazier foe
24 Yacht spot
25 Possess
26 Return to one's residence
28 Vintage
29 Skip a night out
30 Victory sign
31 Golfer Ernie
36 Low-pitched instruments
37 Kimono closer
38 FedEx alternative
41 Hairstyle
42 Audition CD
43 Scored 100 on
44 Mystique
46 Coastal eagle
47 Saturn feature
48 Back talk
51 Office machine

Solution time: 24 mins.

M	A	G	I		B	I	D		A	C	R	E
O	R	A	N		U	S	O		G	O	E	R
B	A	G	U	E	T	T	E		A	Q	U	A
S	T	A	R	S			S	I	T	U	P	S
			E	C	T	O		D	E	E		
F	I	R	S		E	G	G	O		T	N	T
A	D	O		C	A	R	O	L		T	O	W
T	O	O		U	S	E	S		A	E	R	O
		M	A	R		S	H	O	T			
O	V	E	R	D	O			W	H	E	A	T
L	I	T	E		V	I	G	N	E	T	T	E
I	O	T	A		E	V	E		N	U	T	S
O	L	E	S		N	Y	E		A	I	N	T

Yesterday's answer 12-22



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jordin Sparks, 27; Brooke Nevin, 34; Ralph Fiennes, 54; Diane Sawyer, 71.

Happy Birthday: Take the high road. It's easy to take cheap shots at others, but not much fun when it's you who is under the microscope. Give out what you want back and you will fare much better. Minimize rather than expand and stick to what's affordable. Don't try and keep up appearances when being honest is more effective. Do what works best for you. Your numbers are 6, 11, 17, 22, 34, 41, 43.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Keep your life simple and your spending under control. Indulgence will be costly if you attend work-related functions. Don't lose sight of an opportunity to network. You'll have plenty of time to celebrate with friends and family. ✪✪✪

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Something unexpected will take you by surprise. Don't be fooled by an offer. There will be underlying expectations that you should consider before you agree to anything. Don't feel pressured—time is on your side. ✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): Use a work-related event to explore new possibilities. Showing off your skills and knowledge will make some jealous, but others will take note and consider you for advancement. Celebrate with someone you love and prepare to make a move. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Avoid shopping or getting taken for granted by those asking for help, donations or handouts. Industry events or festive celebrations are best handled intelligently by curbing any inclination to be indulgent. Moderation will help you avoid trouble. ✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): Get your place ready to receive guests or visit older friends and relatives. Taking the time to let someone know you care will make a difference in your relationship. You don't have to spend a fortune to prove your love. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Tally up how much you've spent and what you can do to take advantage of any tax credits or personal paperwork that can influence you emotionally, financially or physically. Don't leave anything until the last minute. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): Everything will seem larger-than-life. Try not to overreact or take on more than you can handle. Keeping your word will be important if you don't want to face opposition. Take time for personal pampering and relaxation. Romance is encouraged. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Financial and physical indulgence will be costly. Don't give in to anyone who is asking for too much. Moderation and intuition will lead to the right choice as long as you play it safe. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Travel, reunite with old friends and try to learn from every experience you encounter. Enjoy catching up with others and expanding your ideas based on the information you gather. Life is the best education. You don't always have to be the teacher. ✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Don't let anyone push your buttons. Concentrate on enhancing your appeal and figuring out how you want others to perceive you. Spend more time updating your look and figure out what you want to do next. Avoid conflict. ✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): You can't please everyone, so take care of yourself and do what is in your best interest. Try to avoid heading into the new year with unnecessary debt. Don't overspend to impress others. A kind gesture will be sufficient. ✪✪✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Weigh the pros and cons and make decisions that reflect what will have the best outcome for you. The less cluttered you let your life become, the easier it will be to reach your goals. Be straightforward about your concerns and decisions. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are active, unique and complex. You are an ambitious trendsetter.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			6			5		
	7			8			9	
3		2	4			8		
						3		8
	8						5	
1		4						
		8			7	2		6
	5			4			3	
		9			6			

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/22

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

2	6	3	5	9	1	4	7	8
9	4	7	2	3	8	5	1	6
5	1	8	7	6	4	3	9	2
4	8	1	6	2	3	9	5	7
3	7	9	8	4	5	6	2	1
6	2	5	1	7	9	8	3	4
7	9	2	4	5	6	1	8	3
8	5	6	3	1	7	2	4	9
1	3	4	9	8	2	7	6	5

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/21

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

FILTERING **Solution: 5 letters**

E	M	A	E	T	S	A	W	S	R	E	Y	R	D	V
F	V	O	I	G	T	D	M	A	E	R	T	S	B	E
R	W	E	I	R	N	I	I	F	U	N	N	E	L	N
E	M	A	I	L	Y	I	F	L	U	I	D	S	O	T
E	F	P	F	S	B	O	K	T	O	D	A	M	C	C
C	I	A	R	I	C	A	W	N	E	S	U	U	K	I
A	L	P	E	T	L	I	R	P	I	U	D	E	I	P
N	T	E	T	S	T	T	T	R	C	R	V	T	N	O
R	E	R	A	T	L	H	R	A	I	O	D	E	S	C
U	R	T	E	N	A	E	V	A	M	E	E	N	T	S
F	S	R	H	L	S	R	H	E	T	E	R	R	A	O
R	A	O	P	N	E	E	R	C	S	I	H	E	G	R
E	G	H	P	A	S	S	C	I	T	P	O	T	R	C
S	A	S	I	R	R	I	G	A	T	I	O	N	A	A
H	C	I	G	O	L	O	E	G	N	I	N	I	M	M

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Air Duct, Airy, Barrier, Block, Chelsea, Cleanse, Coffee, Depth, Drinking, Dryers, Email, Filters, Filtration, Fit, Fluids, Free, Fresh, Funnel, Furnace, Gas, Geologic, H Alpha, Heater, Instagram, Internet, Irrigation, Macroscopic, Mathematics, Mining, Oil, Optics, Paper, Pass, Remove, Screen, Short, Sieve, Solids, Steam, Stream, Twitter, Vacuum, Vent, Waste

Yesterday's Answer: Magic

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"I want to be a firefighter!"
BJ Belacora, 6 yrs.

Saipan Tribune

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Cepeda, Ma Lihua Petitioner,	)	FCD-DI CIVIL ACTION NO. 12-0217
vs.	)	
Cepeda, Vicente Joaquin Respondent,	)	**SUMMONS FOR PUBLICATION**

TO THE ABOVE NAME RESPONDENT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is on file with the court, within thirty (30) days after service of the Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to the Petitioner whose address is P.O. Box 501365, Saipan MP 96950 as soon as practical after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at P.O. Box 500307 Susupe, Saipan, MP 96950. It may be prepared for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice. If you fail to file an answer in accordance with this summons, judgment by default may be taken against you for relief in the complaint.

Dated this 18th day of November, 2016

/s/ Clerk of Court

Jonathan L. & Gene A. Garces
P.O. Box 511769
Rota, MP 96951
532-4363

PRO SE

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

In Re The Matter Of The Petition To Appoint General Guardianship For: **Aiden John Araza Garces** Minor Child, By: **Jonathan L. & Gene A. Garces** Petitioners.	)	FCD GU CIVIL ACTION NO. 16-0599R **NOTICE OF HEARING**

Notice is hereby given that the above-entitled matter is set for a hearing on January 6, 2017 at 10:30 a.m. in Rota Courtroom, before Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho.

Dated this 16th day of December, 2016.

/s/ Patrick V. Diaz
Clerk of Court
By: Deputy Clerk of Court

WHATZIT Solution: Reading between the lines

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Find today's solution in classified section

Cousins fined and briefly ejected, scores 55 to lead Kings

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—DeMarcus Cousins returned from a brief ejection and finished with a season-high 55 points, capping a wild day for the hot-tempered big man and sending the Sacramento Kings past the Portland Trail Blazers 126-121 on Tuesday night.

Hours after he was fined by the Kings for his profanity-laced tirade against a newspaper columnist last week, Cousins pulled down 13 rebounds and rallied Sacramento in the fourth quarter.

He made two huge 3-pointers and scored 17 points in the fourth to avenge an earlier overtime loss this season at Portland. The win snapped Sacramento's seven-game losing streak to the Blazers.

It appeared Cousins' night was over before the game even ended.

In the final minute, he put the Kings back in front when he drove the lane for a layup and was fouled by Mason Plumlee.

Cousins initially was given a second technical foul and thus ejected for spitting his mouth piece in the direction of Portland's bench after making the shot. He ran into the tunnel toward the locker room, but the officials huddled and changed the call.

In a most unusual scene, Cousins then returned to the court and made the free throw for a three-point play, giving the Kings a 122-119 lead with 35 seconds left.

"It's ridiculous. It's obvious what's being done out here. It's on a nightly basis," Cousins said. "I hope the world can see now what's going on out here because it's getting ridiculous. It's really ridiculous."

Earlier in the day, the Kings fined Cousins for his tirade last week against Sacramento Bee columnist Andy Furillo. The newspaper reported the fine was $50,000.

AP

Sacramento Kings forward DeMarcus Cousins, left, goes to the basket against Portland Trail Blazers' Meyers Leonard during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2016, in Sacramento, Calif.

The exchange took place in the team's locker room after a win over the Lakers. Cousins pointed a threatening finger in the face of Furillo.

CJ McCollum scored 36 points and Plumlee had a career-high 27 points to go with 13 rebounds for the Blazers, who have lost three straight and dropped seven of eight. Damian Lillard had 24 points and eight assists, and Maurice Harkless had 11 points and 10 rebounds.

Reserve guard Ty Lawson had 16 points and both Anthony Tolliver and Arron Afflalo scored 11 for the Kings, who played without second-leading scorer Rudy Gay.

Cousins put the Kings ahead 119-117 with a 3, but Plumlee countered with a dunk at the other end to tie it with 46 seconds left.

Trailing by six to open the fourth quarter, the Kings outscored Portland 17-4 to take a seven-point lead midway through the period. Lawson put Sacramento in front for the first time, 102-101, with a baseline jumper.

Cavaliers 114, Bucks 108

In Milwaukee, LeBron James made a go-ahead 3-pointer with 24 seconds left in overtime as the Cleveland Cavaliers held on for a 114-108 victory over Milwaukee on Tuesday night to avenge a late November loss.

Milwaukee took a 108-107 lead on a tip-in by Giannis Antetokounmpo with 1:12 left. Cleveland's Kyrie Irving missed a 3-pointer from the left corner on the next possession but Jabari Parker's lay-in attempt at the other end curled out.

James was fouled on the rebound by Antetokounmpo, his sixth. James then hit the deep 3-pointer to put Cleveland up 110-108.

Parker was fouled on a layup attempt on the ensuing possession but missed both free throws. Irving hit a pair of free throws with 15.7 seconds left to make it 112-108.

James had 34 points and Irving 28 for Cleveland, which had lost at Milwaukee 118-101 on Nov. 29. Parker had 30 points and Antetokounmpo added 25. The two teams meet again Wednesday night in Cleveland.

Warriors 104, Jazz 74

In Oakland, California, Stephen Curry scored 25 points with four 3-pointers while Kevin Durant had 22 points as Golden State whipped Utah after a slow start.

Klay Thompson added 17 points and Draymond Green had 15 points, 11 rebounds and five steals as Golden State handed the Jazz their worst defeat of the season.

Joe Johnson scored 14 points for Utah in its seventh straight defeat to the Warriors.

Clippers 119, Nuggets 102

In Los Angeles, J.J. Redick scored 27 points, including 7-for-9 shooting on 3-pointers while Chris Paul had 16 points, 15 assists and eight rebounds as Los Angeles beat Denver.

DeAndre Jordan had 13 points and 13 rebounds and Luc Mbah a Moute added 14 points for the Clippers, who won for the fifth time in six games.

Will Barton led the Nuggets with 22 points off the bench, with Danilo Gallinari adding 17 points.

Spurs 102, Rockets 100

In Houston, Patty Mills hit a 3-pointer with 12.9 seconds left to lift San Antonio over Houston.

Eric Gordon missed a 3-point attempt after that before Manu Ginobili missed two free throws to give Houston one last chance, but James Harden's 3-point attempt bounced off the rim at the buzzer.

The victory is San Antonio's fifth straight and improves the Spurs to 15-1 on the road. It also snaps Houston's NBA-long 10-game winning streak.

Kawhi Leonard led the Spurs with 21 points while LaMarcus Aldridge added 17 points with 10 rebounds.

Harden finished with 31 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists.

Hornets 117, Lakers 113

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Kemba Walker had 28 points and 10 assists while Marco Belinelli scored 11 fourth-quarter points as Charlotte rallied from 19 down to beat Los Angeles.

Walker had 15 points in the third quarter and a key rebound with 27.9 seconds left in the fourth to set up a tiebreaking jumper by Nicolas Batum with 13 seconds remaining.

Batum had 23 points on 8-of-12 shooting and added 10 assists. Belinelli finished with 13 points.

Jordan Clarkson paced the Lakers with 25 points with 7-of-9 3-point shooting and Nick Young added 24 points while hitting 5 of 10 from 3-point range.

Los Angeles made 16 of 33 3-point attempts (48.5 percent) but the Hornets still secured their second straight victory.

Celtics 112, Grizzlies 109, OT

In Memphis, Tennessee, Isaiah Thomas scored a career-high 44 points, including 36 after halftime, to lead Boston past Memphis in overtime.

After the Grizzlies took a 106-105 lead on a rebound basket by Tony Allen with 1:10 left in the extra period, the Celtics scored the next five points.

Al Horford had 17 points and 14 rebounds for the Celtics, who overcame a 17-point deficit in the second half to win their third straight. Avery Bradley added 16 points.

Thomas also matched his career best for 3-pointers, going 7 of 10 from outside the arc.

Marc Gasol and Troy Daniels led Memphis with 24 points apiece. Mike Conley had 19 points and eight assists for the Grizzlies, who lost their third in a row — all at home.

Magic 136, Heat 130, 2 OT

In Miami, Nik Vucevic had 26 points and 12 rebounds while Evan Fournier scored 26 and hit the 3-pointer that put Orlando up for good as the Magic topped Miami in double overtime.

Elfrid Payton scored 22 points and Serge Ibaka added 20 for the Magic, who beat Miami for only the third time in the last 19 meetings.

Tyler Johnson had a career-high 32 points, the most any Heat reserve has ever scored in a game. Hassan Whiteside had 32 points and 15 rebounds for Miami, which wasted a five-point lead in the final minute of regulation and a four-point lead in the last 40 seconds of the first overtime.

Knicks 118, Pacers 111

In New York, Carmelo Anthony matched a season high with 35 points as New York used a big second-half turnaround to beat Indiana.

The Knicks fell behind by 15 in the third quarter then suddenly seized control to snap a three-game losing streak. Anthony scored 26 in the second half.

Derrick Rose had 24 points and Kristaps Porzingis added 21 for the Knicks, who returned home after a poor finish to their five-game trip out West. They improved to 10-4 at home.

Thaddeus Young and Myles Turner each scored 21 points for the Pacers, who had won seven straight in the series.

Raptors 116, Nets 104

In Toronto, Kyle Lowry had 23 points while Norman Powell scored a season-high 21 as Toronto defeated Brooklyn.

Lowry, who shot 8 of 12 from the field and 3 of 5 on 3-pointers, added eight assists and four rebounds before sitting out the final 6 minutes as the Raptors (20-8) won their second straight.

Six different Raptors scored in double figures. Toronto never trailed and led by as many as 23.

Rondae Hollis-Jefferson had 19 points, six rebounds and three assists for the Nets (7-20), who lost their third straight and fifth in six games. It was the 10th straight road loss for the Nets. They are 1-13 away from home this season.

Pelicans 108, 76ers 93

In Philadelphia, Anthony Davis had 31 points and 16 rebounds to lead New Orleans over Philadelphia in a matchup of struggling teams.

Davis scored 11 in New Orleans' dominant second quarter and Terrence Jones finished with 17 points and 10 boards for the Pelicans (10-20), who avenged a Dec. 8 home loss to the 76ers while winning for only the third time in 11 games.

Ersan Ilyasova had 14 points to pace Philadelphia (7-21).

Whiteside vents about touches after Heat loss

MIAMI (AP)—Heat center Hassan Whiteside let his frustrations show after Miami's double-overtime loss to Orlando on Tuesday night, complaining about his lack of touches in the final minutes.

Whiteside took just three shots in the two overtime periods and only one in the second extra session. He finished with a career-high-tying 32 points to go with 15 rebounds and five blocked shots in Miami's 136-130 defeat.

He was asked afterward if he felt like he was getting the ball enough in late moments.

"They say I'm the franchise player. I would think I should get more, but I don't know, man," said Whiteside, who is in the first year of a $98 million, four-year deal with the Heat. "I don't think so, to be honest. But coach's gonna coach."

His postgame interview session ended there. Heat coach Erik Spoelstra's after-game news conference was long completed at that point, so it wasn't clear if he had any immediate reaction or if he was even aware of what Whiteside said.

The Heat wasted a five-point lead late in regulation and a four-point lead late in the first overtime while dropping to 9-20 on the season.

"No disrespect to the Magic or anything, but that was the most disappointing loss of the season in my opinion because we had so many chances to win that game," Whiteside said.

Whiteside played 47 minutes and took 22 shots, both team-highs in the game. He became the second player in Heat history with five consecutive 15-rebound games, Rony Seikaly being the other in 1991.

"We needed a couple key stops at the end, a couple key rebounds at the end," Whiteside said. "Sometimes the cookie crumbles like that. It was a heartbreaker, man. I'm not even going to lie to you on that. That really hurt."

He meant emotionally, though there were some physical issues, as well.

Whiteside needed three stitches postgame to close a cut over his right eye and also said he has been playing with rib pain that flared up after some contact in the second half.

"There was a lot of plays that were questionable," Whiteside said.

Whiteside, the only Heat player to appear in all 29 games, is averaging 18.1 points and an NBA-best 14.8 rebounds per game this season.

Petra Kvitova injured by knife-wielding attacker at her home

PRAGUE (AP)—Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova was injured by a knife-wielding attacker at her home on Tuesday and had to undergo surgery on her left hand.

An operation that took 3 hours and 45 minutes revealed that the left-handed player's injuries were "serious," but "there's no reason to think she wouldn't be able to play tennis," her spokesman Karel Tejkal said.

Kvitova will, however, miss the Australian Open and a significant part of the season as she won't be able to fully train for at least three months, Tejkal said.

Kvitova sustained damaged to the tendons in her left hand, along with injuries to all five fingers and two nerves, Tejkal added.

The 2011 and 2014 champion at the All England Club said she considered herself lucky to have survived the attack Tuesday morning in the eastern Czech town of Prostejov.

"In my attempt to defend myself, I was badly injured on my left hand. I am shaken, but fortunate to be alive," Kvitova wrote on Twitter. "The injury is severe and I will need to see specialists, but if you know anything about me I am strong and I will fight this."

In an earlier statement on the Facebook page of the Czech Republic's Fed Cup team, Kvitova said: "What happened to me was certainly not pleasant, but it's behind me. I have the best possible care and I'm in touch with my loved ones. The worst is behind me."

It was not immediately clear how the injury could affect Kvitova's play. She underwent surgery "because of her condition and future career," said Tejkal, who described the incident as a burglary. Prostejov police spokesman Frantisek Korinek said the attacker, a man who is about 35 years old, escaped from the scene and was at large. He said police have launched a manhunt.

Kvitova was scheduled to participate in a charity event in the city of Brno on Tuesday with another Czech player, Lucie Safarova.

"It's horrible," Safarova told Czech public radio. "Things like that are shocking to all of us. It can happen to anyone of us. That's really terrible."

In April 1993, Monica Seles was at the height of her success when she was stabbed in the back during a changeover at a tournament in Hamburg. A man reached over a courtside railing and knifed her, leaving an inch-deep slit between her shoulder blades.

Seles returned to the game 27 months later and reached the 1995 U.S. Open final.

In an unrelated move earlier Tuesday, Kvitova withdrew from the Czech Republic team at next month's Hopman Cup mixed-team tennis tournament because of an earlier foot injury.

AP

This is a Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2016 file photo of Petra Kvitova of the Czech Republic, clenches her left hand as she reacts after winning a point against Daria Gavrilova of Australia during their second round match at the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia.

MLB BRIEFS

Yankees trade reliever Nick Goody to Indians

NEW YORK (AP)—Pitcher Nick Goody has been traded from the New York Yankees to the Cleveland Indians for a player to be named or $50,000. The teams said Tuesday the swap must be completed by May 5. A 25-year-old right-hander, Goody had a 4.66 ERA in 27 relief appearances for the Yankees this year, striking out 34 in 29 innings. He was a sixth-round pick in the 2012 amateur draft and was sidelined following reconstructive right elbow surgery in April 2013. Goody made his big league debut in July 2015 and pitched in seven games for New York that year. He was designated for assignment Dec. 15 to open a roster spot needed when the Yankees completed their $86 million, five-year contract with free agent reliever Aroldis Chapman.

Daniel Hudson, Pirates agree to $11M million, 2-year deal

PITTSBURGH (AP)—The Pirates bolstered their bullpen on Monday, agreeing to an $11 million, two-year contract with reliever Daniel Hudson. Hudson, 29, will make $5.5 million in both 2017 and 2018. The contract includes $1.5 million annually in performance bonuses based on games finished starting at 30 and ending at 60. Hudson went 3-2 with a 5.22 ERA in 70 appearances for the Diamondbacks in 2016. Hudson, a former starter who became a reliever after undergoing reconstructive elbow surgery on his right (throwing) elbow in 2012 and 2013, thanked the Diamondbacks for sticking with him "through some really tough times." He later added "Let's do this Pittsburgh." Hudson's addition gives the Pirates some flexibility in their bullpen heading into spring training. Tony Watson finished with 15 saves last season after taking over the closer's role when All-Star Mark Melancon was dealt to Washington at the trade deadline.

Jimmy Rollins receives minor league contract from Giants

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Shortstop Jimmy Rollins could be headed back to his native Bay Area, agreeing to a minor league contract with the San Francisco Giants that includes an invitation to big league spring training camp. General manager Bobby Evans confirmed the deal Monday. While the Giants' infield is all but set, San Francisco has learned the importance of depth at all of those spots with injuries to third baseman Eduardo Nunez down the stretch and also second baseman Joe Panik the past two seasons. If Rollins makes the team as a backup, he would be playing in the Bay Area regularly for the first time in his career as he enters his 18th season. He played his first 15 seasons with the Phillies, then one each with the Los Angeles Dodgers and Chicago White Sox. The 38-year-old batted .221 with two home runs, eight RBIs and five stolen bases last season for Chicago. He was born in Oakland and went to school in nearby Alameda.

Red Sox trade pitcher Clay Buchholz to Phillies

BOSTON (AP)—The Red Sox kept adding starting pitchers, and Clay Buchholz kept getting bumped further down in the rotation.

There was David Price last offseason and Drew Pomeranz mid-year. By the time Chris Sale was acquired from the Chicago White Sox at the winter meetings this month, Boston had seven starters to choose from—most of them more consistent than Buchholz, and a few of them on better deals.

Red Sox president Dave Dombrowski began to sort out his starting pitching argy-bargy on Tuesday, trading Buchholz to the Philadelphia Phillies for minor league second baseman Josh Tobias.

The deal ends a decade in the Boston system in which Buchholz, a first-round draft pick, pitched a no-hitter as a rookie and twice made the All-Star game but failed to develop into a consistent and dependable member of the rotation.

"We had seven established big league starters. We felt like we had some depth there," Dombrowski said. "The deal that made the most sense was Clay."

Now 32, Buchholz pitched a no-hitter in 2007 in his second major league game and went 17-7 with a 2.33 ERA in 2010 to earn his first All-Star selection. In 2013, Buchholz was 12-1 with a 1.74 ERA despite missing more than three months with a neck injury; he also pitched four scoreless innings in a victory over St. Louis in the World Series.

But he hasn't finished above .500 since, going 8-10 with a 4.78 ERA last season while bouncing back and forth from the rotation to the bullpen. In all, he is 81-61 with a 3.96 ERA in parts of 10 big league seasons.

Heading into next season, he would have to compete for a spot on the starting staff not only with current and former Cy Young Award winners Rick Porcello and Price but with 2016 All-Stars Sale, Pomeranz and Steven Wright.

Buchholz "wouldn't necessarily have an opportunity to start here," Dombrowski said, adding that Eduardo Rodriguez is also competing for a spot in the rotation. "It was really our choice to pursue this one more than some of the other guys."

Buchholz will get that chance in Philadelphia. He joins a rotation that includes Jeremy Hellickson, Jerad Eickhoff and Vince Velasquez, with Aaron Nola joining them if healthy. Jake Thompson, Zach Effin and Alec Asher could compete for a spot if Nola's elbow holds him back.

"I would be absolutely thrilled if this was the group we entered camp with," said Phillies general manager Matt Klentak, who began looking at Buchholz in the middle of last year when the pitcher was being floated as trade bait. "We viewed him at that time as a potential bounce-back candidate."

Buchholz has a $13.5 million salary in 2017, then is eligible for free agency. If he pitches well but the Phillies aren't in contention, he could bring more back to the team than he cost.

"If the standings are looking the other way in July, we will have a number of players in the last years of their contracts," Klentak said.

The deal also helps the Red Sox get under the threshold for baseball's luxury tax - one of Dombrowski's stated goals.

The club is projected to have about $184 million in commitments to salary, estimated deals with arbitration-eligible players and benefits for purposes of the luxury tax, leaving it well under next year's $195 million tax threshold.

"It's always part of the overall equation, not a real driving force for us," Dombrowski said. "It fell into play here very well for us. It also creates some flexibility for us as we go forward."

Tobias, 24, has hit .301 in 188 minor league games since being selected by the Phillies in the 10th round of the 2015 amateur draft. To make room for Buchholz on the 40-man roster, the Phillies designated third baseman Richie Shaffer for assignment.

MVA hosts *Golf Digest* FAM tour

The Marianas Visitors Authority continues to promote the world-class golf available in the Northern Marianas-most recently with a media FAM(iliarization) tour attracting media from Korea, Japan, China and Singapore.

On Dec. 5-9, 2016, the MVA hosted four media outlets and three power bloggers for a tour of Lao Lao Bay Golf & Resort, Kingfisher Golf Links, and Coral Ocean Golf Resort, introducing golf facilities and services in the NMI to attract more golfers. The participating media from Japan were Regina magazine, *Golf Digest Traveler* magazine; from China, Singapore, and Korea were *Golf Digest* magazine, and from Korea were also three power bloggers specializing in travel and golf with at least 3,000 daily visitors to their blogs. *Golf Digest Magazine* is the biggest and most renowned golf magazine in the world with a circulation of 10 million in 56 countries in 17 language.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Participants and hosts of the Marianas Visitors Authority's golf FAM(iliarization) visit LaoLao Bay Golf Resort on Dec. 6, 2016, in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. Pictured from left are Jianjie Ma, Best Sunshine International VP David Largent, Ju Kuang Tan, Jing Chen, Meifang Hu, and MVA marketing manager Bruce Bateman.

"This month's golf FAM tour is intended to grow the golf niche market, which Saipan and Rota have great potential for due to our year-round tropical weather, professionally designed courses, and stunning course views," said MVA marketing manager Bruce Bateman. "We already have a strong golf market in Korea, and we continue work to rebuild the numbers of golfers from Japan and develop the new golf market of China. Singapore was also a welcome addition to this month's tour, as *Golf Digest* publishes there, as well. The trip also motivates travel agents and airlines to launch new marketing plans that sell more NMI products related to golf tourism."

Other sites visited and activities in Saipan on the tour included Managaha, I'Sagua Spa at Hyatt Regency Saipan, Mt. Tapochao, Best Sunshine Int'l gaming facility and yacht, scenic and historic sites of Marpi, Mariana Ocean, and"mwar"-making(floral head leis).

A welcoming dinner was hosted by Best Sunshine International, and dining was enjoyed at Bubba Gump Shrimp Factory, Surf Club, Boka Boka, Zen Teppenyaki Restaurant, World Café at Fiesta Resort & Spa, Kinpachi Restaurant, Amigo Restaurant, and Isla Teppenyaki at Pacific Islands Club Saipan. The group lodged at LaoLao Bay Golf Resort and Kensington Hotel Saipan.

In addition to media coverage, the FAM tour will receive additional exposure on the MVA's social media channels and blogs overseas.

Best Sunshine Int'l supported the groups by providing ground transportation throughout their stay, LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort and Kingfisher Golf Links both provided golf play, meals and other services ata major discount to the group, and the Department of Public Lands provided film permits. ***(MVA)***

7 Raiders, 6 Falcons selected to Pro Bowl

NEW YORK (AP)—After more than a decade as the NFL's black hole, the Oakland Raiders are back in the playoffs and filling up the Pro Bowl.

The resurgent Raiders, enjoying their first winning season in 14 years, lead the league with seven players selected for next month's all-star game.

Quarterback Derek Carr, wide receiver Amari Cooper, center Rodney Hudson, defensive end Khalil Mack, safety Reggie Nelson, guard Kelechi Osemele and tackle Donald Penn were picked from the Raiders, who occupy first place in the AFC West going into Week 16.

The Raiders (11-3) had three players selected from their sturdy offensive line, a big reason the team has finally clinched its first playoff berth since losing the 2003 Super Bowl.

"It means a lot. It's a great honor to be recognized for what you do," Hudson said. "It's very humbling. I give a lot of thanks to our teammates because you can't do any of it by yourself."

Six members of the Atlanta Falcons (9-5) were selected, most among NFC teams. Outside linebacker Vic Beasley, kicker Matt Bryant, running back Devonta Freeman, wide receiver Julio Jones, center Alex Mack and quarterback Matt Ryan were chosen from the NFC South leaders.

Despite missing the first four games of the season because of his "Deflategate" suspension, New England quarterback Tom Brady was picked for the 12th time in his career. Cleveland tackle Joe Thomas and Arizona wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald were honored for the 10th time.

Fitzgerald's 10 Pro Bowl selections are the second-most in NFL history by a wide receiver. Only Hall of Famer Jerry Rice (13) has more.

Twenty-six of the 32 teams had at least one player picked. Twenty players were chosen for the first time, including three rookies: Ezekiel Elliott and Dak Prescott from Dallas, and Kansas City's Tyreek Hill.

Among the notable omissions was Detroit quarterback Matthew Stafford. The first-place Lions, who lead the NFC North at 9-5, did not have a single representative.

16

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opment.

Sekiguchi spent the first few days of the coaching course making introduction about the coaching profession and explaining and demonstrating the sport's fundamentals. The CNMI coach also discussed nutrition, hygiene, youth development, fitness test, game tactics, and communication.

The latter part of the course then focused on defending and attacking plays, while Sekiguchi made practical assessment of the 16 participants during the final day of the event. The 16 individuals also took theoretical and practical exams and results will be out in a month.

"Four our sake and for the sake of CNMI football, we have to pass. We thanked coach Seki for being there and helping us out," said Kanoa Football Club's Mikky Vargas.

Joining Vargas on the class were Jeralyn Castillo, Ryu Tanzawa, Liz Phan, Longwen Ji, Rodwealth Espana, Jov Chavez, Marielle Gariguez, Jonathan Takano, Panapa Peteru, Takumi Fukui, Yuji Ochiai, Keisuke Kitamura, Shingo Suzuki, Fumikazu Sukenari, and Tadaomi Yasuda.

PATRIOTS

From Page 28

The Patriots point guard went on to lead all scorers with his 16 markers, while Galarse also had twin digits with 10, 6 of them came in the fourth frame. Jaymark De Guzman and Shane Deleon Guerrero were the other double-figure scorers for San Antonio, tallying 14 and 11, respectively.

San Antonio finished the round-robin regular season with a 5-5 record to take the No. 6 ranking in the eight-team playoffs. The Junior Ol'Aces had a 2-8 mark and despite the loss it still caught the last bus to the playoff round after beating the Talaabwogh Stars and MGNEL Construction in the tiebreak. The Ol'Aces earned the No. 8 seeding and final playoff seat as it scored the most points (736) among the three tied squads. Talaabwogh and MGNEL collected 638 and 507 points, respectively, falling short in their playoff bids and joining Chinese Association for an early vacation.

The other playoff qualifiers were Ace Hardware, Ol'Aces, and Duenas Compound, which had similar 8-2 records, Saipan Apparel (7-3), GMI Market (6-4), and 5-Star Construction (5-5). Ace prevailed in the tiebreak for the top spot with its 812 points in 10 games, while the Ol'Aces slid to No. 2 and Duenas Compound dropped to No. 3.

The first round of the playoffs will have a single-elimination format, while the second and succeeding phases of the competition will be a double-elimination affair. Playoff games will begin on Jan. 9 with the top-ranked Ace Hardware meeting the Junior Ol'Aces and the Ol'Aces battling 5-Star. Other first round pairings (Jan. 11) are Saipan Apparel versus GMI Market and DC Compound against the San Antonio Patriots.

Patriots 67 — Rabasto 16, De Guzman 14, Deleon Guerrero 11, Galarse 10, Barbo 10, Espinosa 4.

Junior Ol'Aces 62 — Sakisat 12, Castillo 9, Onopwiy 9, Castro 8, Siech 6, Kabiriel 2, Atan 2, Blake 2.

Scoring by quarters: 13-21, 31-35, 43-54, 67-62.

SWEEP

From Page 28

Chacha threatened Hopwood in the homestretch despite a very slow start as the former made only three field goals in the first quarter, allowing the eventual champion to take a 12-6 advantage. Chacha then caught Hopwood flatfooted in the opening minutes of the second canto after launching a 10-0 run to grab the lead. Chacha went on to take a 25-18 halftime edge, behind the 10 points of Jay Art Palmes.

Palmes continued to lead Chacha's offense in the second half, but Hopwood regained its bearings and had Christopher Ayuyu, Francisco Mizutani, Darry Soriano, Albert Atan, and Gabriel Sacramento teaming up in giving their squad enough cushion. Sacramento's pair of free throws that came at the last two-minute mark of the match served as insurance for Hopwood.

Atan top-scored for Hopwood with his 12 points, while Ayuyu also finished in twin digits with his 10 markers. Mizutani chipped in 8. Palmes paced Chacha with his game-high 16 markers.

Meanwhile, Hopwood 4 leaned on the good offensive games of Allyiah Fernandez and Jyolly Diaz to beat sister team Hopwood 5. Fernandez knocked in 13 points, while Diaz also had double figures with her 12 markers. Sisters Aiko and Nichko Rasiang logged 4 points apiece for the eventual champion.

Diaz and Fernandez alternately hit baskets for Hopwood 4 to foil Hopwood 4's repeated comeback bids and secure the division championship.

Girls Finals

Hopwood 4 33 — Fernandez 13, Diaz 12, A. Rasing 4, N. Rasiang 4.

Hopwood 5 29 — Monterubio 9, Echavez 6, Joyce 6, Dizon 2, Repoberbio 2, Malasarte 2, Cruzat 2.

Boys Finals

Hopwood 41 — Atan 12, Ayuyu 10, Mizutani 8, Soriano 5, G. Sacramento 4, Peterson 2.

Chacha 40 — Palmes 16, Carlos 7, Rabauliman 6, C. Babauta 3, Indalecio 2, Cruz 2, D. Babauta 2, Sanchez 2.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	20	8	.714	—
Boston	16	12	.571	4
New York	15	13	.536	5
Brooklyn	7	20	.259	12½
Philadelphia	7	21	.250	13

Southeast Division

Charlotte	16	13	.552	—
Atlanta	14	14	.500	1½
Washington	12	15	.444	3
Orlando	13	17	.433	3½
Miami	9	20	.310	7

Central Division

Cleveland	20	6	.769	—
Chicago	14	13	.519	6½
Milwaukee	13	13	.500	7
Indiana	15	15	.500	7
Detroit	14	16	.467	8

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	23	5	.821	—
Houston	21	8	.724	2½
Memphis	18	12	.600	6
New Orleans	10	20	.333	14
Dallas	7	21	.250	16

Northwest Division

Utah	18	11	.621	—
Oklahoma City	16	12	.571	1½
Portland	13	17	.433	5½
Denver	12	17	.414	6
Minnesota	8	19	.296	9

Pacific Division

Golden State	25	4	.862	—
L.A. Clippers	21	8	.724	4
Sacramento	11	17	.393	13½
L.A. Lakers	11	20	.355	15
Phoenix	8	20	.286	16½

NBA LEADERS

Scoring

	G	FG	FT	PTS	AVG
Westbrook, OKC	28	288	239	866	30.9
Davis, NOR	28	294	225	829	29.6
Cousins, SAC	27	270	202	790	29.3
DeRozan, TOR	28	280	208	781	27.9
Harden, HOU	29	235	250	806	27.8
Lillard, POR	30	263	216	820	27.3
Thomas, BOS	24	196	189	639	26.6
Durant, GOL	29	261	168	744	25.7
James, CLE	24	224	119	609	25.4
Curry, GOL	29	233	141	717	24.7
Butler, CHI	27	203	226	663	24.6
Irving, CLE	24	213	89	575	24.0
Leonard, SAN	28	223	174	670	23.9
Wall, WAS	25	212	137	593	23.7
Anthony, NYK	27	220	118	615	22.8
Beal, WAS	24	189	98	546	22.8
Antetokounmpo, MIL	26	215	140	589	22.7
Walker, CHA	28	227	104	634	22.6
McCollum, POR	30	250	97	674	22.5
Towns, MIN	27	230	107	603	22.3

FG Percentage

	FG	FGA	PCT
Gobert, UTA	123	176	.699
Jordan, LAC	131	197	.665
Capela, HOU	151	236	.640
Howard, ATL	146	231	.632
Adams, OKC	129	221	.584
Zeller, CHA	109	187	.583
Jokic, DEN	121	211	.573
Gortat, WAS	135	236	.572
Gibson, CHI	147	265	.555
Kanter, OKC	137	248	.552

Rebounds

	G	OFF	DEF	TOT	AVG
Whiteside, MIA	29	121	309	430	14.8
Drummond, DET	29	110	278	388	13.4
Howard, ATL	26	121	218	339	13.0
Jordan, LAC	29	100	277	377	13.0
Gortat, WAS	27	92	227	319	11.8
Chandler, PHX	20	62	174	236	11.8
Gobert, UTA	29	90	251	341	11.8
Towns, MIN	27	91	209	300	11.1
Davis, NOR	28	54	256	310	11.1
Vucevic, ORL	27	70	224	294	10.9

Assists

	G	AST	AVG
Harden, HOU	29	338	11.7
Westbrook, OKC	28	305	10.9
Paul, LAC	29	282	9.7
Wall, WAS	25	242	9.7
James, CLE	24	215	9.0
Frazier, NOR	29	215	7.4
Lowry, TOR	28	207	7.4
Teague, IND	30	218	7.3
Rondo, CHI	23	166	7.2
Green, GOL	28	202	7.2

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

2016 Public School System Basketball Tournament Boys Finals

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Saipan Southern High School's Nathan Kapileo splits the defense of two Kagman High School players during their title game in the 2016 Public School System Basketball Tournament last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Saipan Southern High School's Greg Sablan fakes off the defense of three Kagman High School players.

Kagman High School's Jeff Castro, left, challenges the defense of Saipan Southern High School's N-Nes Siech.

Saipan Southern High School's N-Nes Siech pulls up for a teardrop shot.

Kagman High School's Aaron Ogumoro, left, looks for a teammate to pass the ball to as he is tightly guarded by Saipan Southern High School's Roberto Paragados.

Saipan Southern High School's Roberto Paragados pulls up for a fadeaway jumper in front of Kagman High School's Dean Blake.

A Kagman High School player dribbles and uses his body to protect it from a Saipan Southern High School defender.

Saipan Southern High School's June Alipio is sandwiched by two Kagman High School defenders.

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Sweep for Hopwood in 7th/8th grade caging

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Hopwood Junior High School survived a late scare from Chacha Oceanview Middle School to pull off a 41-40 victory in the boys 7th/8th grade title game in the 2016 Wellness Through Basketball Tournament last Tuesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Hopwood's nail-biting win over Chacha completed the Hilitais' sweep in the division as Hopwood 4 earlier downed Hopwood 5 in the girls finale, 33-39.

In the boys title duel, Hopwood squandered a double-digit lead in the last two minutes of the game, but thankfully, Chacha still fell short as the latter could not hit that one important basket despite several attempts in the closing seconds of the match.

See SWEEP on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Hopwood Junior High School's Francisco Mizutani, second left, beats teammate Christopher Ayuyu, right, and Chacha Oceanview Middle School's Jay Art Palmes for the rebound during the first quarter of their title game in the 7th/8th grade division of the 2016 Wellness Through Basketball Tournament last Tuesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Patriots win last regular season game

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The San Antonio Patriots closed out the regular season of Mariana Islands Basketball Federation's Inaugural Men's Outdoor League on a winning note after outclassing the Junior Ol'Aces, 67-62, last Tuesday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

It was a come-from-behind victory for the Patriots, who faced a 43-54 deficit at the end of the third period. Sean Rabasto and Leo Galarse brought the Patriots back in the game in the fourth quarter and stole the win after combining for 13 of the team's 24 markers in the final canto. Rabasto put the finishing touches on San Antonio's successful rally after registering the squad's last 5 points, including three crucial free throws.

See PATRIOTS on Page 26

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
The San Antonio Patriots' Leo Galarse, right, takes off for a layup against a Talaabwogh Stars player during an earlier game in the MIBF outdoor caging at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

16 join AFC C certificate coaching course

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Northern Mariana Islands Football Association held its first-ever Asian Football Confederation C certification coaching course this month with 16 individuals attending the two-weeklong event.

CNMI Men's National Team coach and NMIFA technical director Kiyoshi Sekiguchi conducted the course that was held from Dec. 2 to 18 at the Northern Marianas College and Koblerville Elementary School. NMC hosted the theoretical parts of the course that were held on weekdays, while the practical session and a couple more theoretical classes took place a KES.

"I would like to express my appreciation to all the participants. They are very open minded and aggressive during our sessions. We had very good discussions on the pitch and in the classroom. They are getting better day by day and I was impressed with their attitude while taking the course. However, some of them need more coaching opportunities," said Sekiguchi, who holds a pro license in coaching and an AFC-recognized coaching instructor.

Sekiguchi added that having experienced and educated coaches will ensure that players will be taught with proper skills and techniques and will ensure their continued devel-

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO
NMIFA technical director Kiyoshi Sekiguchi, right, demonstrates a ball control technique during a practical session of the Asian Football Confederation C certification coaching course held early this month at the Koblerville Elementary School Field.